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THE ROOTS OF IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY

by

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THE ROOTS OF IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOE	Assembly of Experts
APOC	Anglo-Persian Oil Company
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNN	Cable News Network
FMI	Freedom Movement of Iran
GNP	Gross National Product
ICMG	Islamic Coalition of Mourning Groups (Hey'at-ha-ye Mo'talefeh-ye Eslami)
ILSA	Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996
IPO	Islamic Propaganda Organization
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Pasdaran)
IRP	Islamic Republican Party
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party
MOIS	Ministry of Information and Security
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
SAIRI	Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SAVAK	Sazman-e Ettela 'at Va Amniyat-e Keshvar (National Organization for Intelligence and Security)
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
VE	Victory in Europe

I. INTRODUCTION

Hojatolislam Seyyed Mohammad Khatami was elected president of the Islamic Republic of Iran in May of 1997, prompting many around the world to speculate in what direction the new president would lead Iran's policy. Despite the fact that the ruling clergy favored Speaker of the Majlis Ali Akbar Nategh-Nouri, Khatami won the election with almost 70 percent of the popular vote in a four-way race. Khatami's platform called for many reforms, all domestic in orientation. However, many inside and outside of Iran speculated that he might chart a new course in foreign policy, especially vis-à-vis the United States, as a part of his reform package.

Those who await such changes should understand the constraints placed on Iranian foreign policy making. Individual decision-makers, such as Khatami, have some latitude in making policy. This latitude is constrained by domestic cultural, historical, and institutional factors. These factors determine what options are available for decision-makers like Khatami from which to choose.

The first factor stems from Iran's long history of foreign domination. This history goes back at least to the 4th century BC with Alexander the Great's invasion. Repeated invasions led to a distrust and even hatred of foreigners by Iranians. The history most relevant to recent foreign policy in Iran began with Iran's brush with Western colonialism in the 19th century. Foreign intervention, attempts at foreign domination in the eyes of most Iranians, has continued up to the present day. This factor has been a significant driver of both domestic and foreign policy in Iran. It has also limited options available to

Iranian policy makers.

The second factor stems from the institution of Twelver Shi'ism in Iran, which has and continues to be decisive in Iranian policy making. Iran's official name, the Islamic Republic, indicates the importance played by Islam in all affairs of governance. This factor directly impacts foreign policy decisions—some decisions are made or avoided based on their “Islamic” content. It has also affected foreign policy by establishing the “rules of the game” that determine policy outcomes.

The third factor that shapes foreign policy in a significant manner is the current structure of the government. The de-centralized nature of power prevents any one decision-maker from controlling all of Iran's foreign policy. It is quite possible for contradictory policies to be pursued simultaneously by different members in the governing structure. The president represents Iran to most international bodies and appoints ministers, including the minister of defense. He signs treaties, receives the credentials of foreign ambassadors, endorses Iranian ambassadors sent abroad, and presides over the Supreme National Security Council. From this it would appear that he directs Iran's foreign policy, but control of the armed forces and state radio and television remain under the Supreme Leader, Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Additionally, the Supreme Leader can declare war and peace, order mobilization, and he appoints or approves the selection/election of most important officials, including the president. Several autonomous Islamic councils, such as the Martyr Foundation, the Islamic Propaganda Organization, and the Foundation of the Oppressed, exist under his oversight. They are not accountable to any branch of the state and receive their own funding. They

are therefore capable of making and executing policies without the knowledge or consent of the rest of the government. Clearly, this situation and its implications bear examination to better understand the nature of Iranian foreign policy.

Understanding and predicting Iranian foreign policy is important for several reasons. Iran is a major producer of oil and natural gas. It is the third largest producer of oil in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), possessing 92.9 billion barrels of recoverable oil reserves, 9.2 percent of the world total. With 699 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, Iran is the second largest country in recoverable natural gas reserves in the world, next to the former Soviet Union.¹

Iran occupies a strategic location along the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, with 2,440 km of coastline.² It forms a bridge between the Middle East and Central and South Asia. Iranian foreign policy can have a direct effect on events in the Persian Gulf region and in the developing states of Central Asia. This policy also impacts the world oil and gas economy, which in turn greatly affects Europe and Japan, and affects other countries including the United States to a lesser degree.

This paper uses a historical institutional approach to analyze the Iranian foreign policy process. This approach seeks historical patterns that form “underlying determinants” that shape the actions of individuals, as individual intentions “are so numerous, so varied, and so contradictory that their complex interaction produces results that no one intended or could even foresee.”³ This method also seeks to “illuminate how

¹ “Walden Country Reports: Iran,” 30 Jan 1995; available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

² “Islamic Republic of Iran”; available from <http://www.netiran.com/profile.html>; Internet.

³ Gordon Wood, “The American Revolution,” in *Revolutions: A Comparative Study*, ed. Lawrence Kaplan (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1973), 129; quoted in Theda Skocpol, *Social*

political struggles ‘are mediated by the institutional setting in which [they] take place.’”⁴

This includes the formal organizations and the informal rules and procedures that define the institutions. Therefore, it is not the intention of this paper to closely examine Iranian foreign policy per se; instead, this paper seeks to shed light upon the process through which foreign policy is determined in Iran.

The specific hypothesis I have drawn from the theory of historical institutionalism as regards Iran follows: a history of foreign domination, the presence of Islam (both as a historical and as an institutional factor), and the specific institutions set up within the present-day government of the Islamic Republic drive and constrain Iranian foreign policy. This hypothesis will be examined in this paper through a longitudinal case study that gives a brief historical summary for context and focuses on key moments in the modern history of foreign domination and/or Islam that are relevant to foreign policy decisions. An examination of Iran’s current government structure will also be undertaken. This hypothesis does not claim to accurately represent every detail of the foreign policy process, as “explanatory power, however, is gained by moving away from ‘reality,’ not by staying close to it.”⁵ Therefore, this hypothesis seeks maximum explanatory power regarding Iranian foreign policy with a minimum of effort.

The history of foreign domination, Islam, and structural factors do not wholly determine Iranian foreign policy. Domestic politics, regional factors, and the individual

Revolutions in the Modern World (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 111-112.

⁴ Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,” in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979), 7.

policy makers themselves all have a part to play in the formation of foreign policy. However, much can be learned about Iranian foreign policy through the first three factors discussed. Those factors greatly limit the options available for individuals to choose from, notwithstanding domestic political or regional pressures. Furthermore, these three key factors guide Iranian foreign policy in all situations. Other factors may be examined in detail on a case-by-case basis to contribute toward greater understanding or prediction.

Various political factions do exist in Iran, and the competition between them often affects or produces foreign policies. For example, Khatami is considered a “moderate” or a “reformer,” while Khamenei is considered a “conservative” or a “radical.” However, the band of accepted political discourse is very narrow on the full spectrum of politics. For instance, both Khatami and Khamenei are Shia clerics, the former a hojatolislam, the latter a grand ayatollah. Neither opposes the rule of the (religious) jurist, velayat-e faqih. Those who fall outside of this narrow band are branded as traitors and excluded from the political process. This narrow band of discourse is defined by the three key factors already noted.

Regional factors affect foreign policy specific to the region, but not for Iranian foreign policy in general. Some regionally oriented foreign policy decisions are of significance outside of the region, such as Iran’s continued opposition to the Middle East peace process. Another such policy is Iran’s pursuit of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction. These policies can best be understood from the Iranian perspective by examining the regional factors propelling them. However, even regionally oriented policies are constrained by the three key factors, whereas general Iranian foreign policy is

not always affected by regional concerns. Therefore, understanding the three key factors helps one to understand even Iranian regional policy, while understanding regional factors does not lend toward understanding Iranian foreign policy as a whole.

Policy does not just occur by itself—it is created and implemented by individuals. It is a common mistake, therefore, to ascribe to individuals all or most of the credit for the policies of a particular state. As noted previously, there are many potential policies that are simply not options for particular individuals to pursue, regardless of their position, authority, or charisma. The common experiences and the common religion held by important individuals in the government bind them together and drive them toward certain common goals. Even if a person should want to pursue a policy at odds with these common goals, he would find himself ostracized, and possibly imprisoned, if he acted on this desire. Therefore, knowing the various individuals involved is important on a case-by-case basis in order to understand or predict a situation on a detailed level. However, a general understanding may be obtained knowing only the three key factors, regardless of which individuals are involved.

The importance of the three key factors will be shown using two methods. The first is the explicit connection between the factor and the policy made by the individual or individuals responsible for making it. This includes specific references to Islamic principles or to past experiences of Western domination made by those in authority. The second is the implicit connection between an action and one or more of the three key factors. It is possible for a person in authority to state the reasons and intentions for a given action and then pursue a different policy. Therefore, confirmation will be sought

for all stated connections in the actual actions carried out. In the case where no clear explanation is given, an explanation will be inferred based on the action itself.

II. FROM THE “SHADOW OF GOD” TO THE SHADOW OF THE WEST

President Khatami had his first interview with an American journalist on January 7, 1998, in a televised interview with Cable News Network’s (CNN’s) Christiane Amanpour. He listed cases in which Americans tried to dominate Iran and stated that this attempt at domination has and continues to drive Iranian foreign policy. Included in his list was the “admitted involvement of the U.S. Government in the 1953 coup detat [sic] which toppled Mosaddeqs [sic] national government, immediately followed by a \$45 million loan to strengthen unpopular foreign installed Government.” The Capitulation Law, “imposed by the U.S. on Iran,” the downing of an Iranian airliner and the subsequent “decoration of the commander of the American naval vessel responsible for the tragedy,” the “recent allocation \$20 million by the U.S. Congress to topple the Iranian government,” and the “DAmato act [the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, or ILSA]” rounded out the list.⁶

All of these incidents currently drive Iranian foreign policy by making the Iranians feel they have “no need for ties with the U.S.” and that “many progressive countries—including the Europeans—are far more advanced in their foreign policies than the U.S.” In short, Khatami felt Iran has “no need for political ties with the United States.” Furthermore, the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran in November 1979 was the result of “revolutionary fervor and the pressures to which the Iranian nation was

⁶ “Transcript of Interview with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami,” *Cable News Network*, 7 Jan 1998, 8-9; available from <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9801/07/iran/interview.html>; Internet.

subjected,” including the “humiliations and inequities imposed upon them [the Iranians] by the policies of the U.S. and others.” In other words, the seizure of the embassy was the direct result of foreign (American) attempts at domination.⁷

Historically speaking, Iran (known as Persia before the time of Reza Shah Pahlavi) was frequently the seat of various empires, so it was not always the victim of foreign domination. Whether it was referred to as the Persian, Mede, Parthian, Sassanid, or Safavid Empire, the Persians frequently determined their own destiny as well as dominated others. In fact, the Parthians/Persians were the only significant empire the Romans, including their successors the Byzantines, were never able to vanquish. In 260 AD the Persians even captured the Roman Emperor Valerian and ransomed him back to his subjects.⁸

Despite these glorious moments of history, however, the Persians were frequently the victims of invasions as well. Iran’s location as the bridge between Central and South Asia and the Middle East made it a natural corridor for foreign armies. Included in these were Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC, the Arabs in the 7th century AD, the Turks in the 11th century, and the Mongols in the 13th century. From their inception in the 16th century, the Safavids had to constantly struggle against domination by the Ottomans. The founder of the Safavids, Shah Ismail Safavi (self-titled the Shadow of God on Earth), established Twelver Shi’ism in Iran in 1501 to unite the country and compete against the Sunni Ottomans who claimed their sultan was the caliph of all

⁷ Ibid., 7-9.

⁸ John W. Limbert, “Islamic Republic of Iran,” in *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, 3rd ed., ed. David E. Long and Bernard Reich (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 43.

Islam.⁹ The Sunni Afghans conquered Iran in 1722, and it was not until the establishment of the Qajar dynasty by Agha Mohammad Khan in 1796 that Iran regained its independence and unity.¹⁰ This long history of invasion and foreign domination ingrained a suspicion and even hatred of foreigners in Iranian culture.

It was in these circumstances that Iran had its first brush with Western colonialism. Russia appeared to be the next great power to dominate Iran. The independent khanates in Central Asia all fell to the power of Czarist armies. Russia established Iran's northeast border after defeating the Turkoman tribes at Geok-Tappeh in 1881 and annexing Marv in 1884. The northern border was delineated by the Treaty of Turkmanchay in 1828, which prohibited Iran from maintaining a navy on the Caspian Sea, forced Iran to pay Russia an indemnity, limited duties on Russian goods to five percent, and granted extraterritorial capitulations to Russian merchants.¹¹

The British quickly followed on the heels of the Russians. In 1873 the Qajar ruler Shah Nasir al-Din sold a concession for banking, railroads, irrigation, and mining to Baron de Reuter, a British citizen. Domestic opposition, backed by Russian objections, forced the Shah to cancel the concession. In spite of this, Baron de Reuter was later authorized to found the Imperial Bank of Persia. In 1890 Nasir al-Din sold a concession to a British company to control the production, sale, and export of all tobacco in Iran. The rising cost of tobacco affected the masses in Iran, spurring a nationwide boycott of tobacco. The boycott was inspired by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and supported by the Shia ulama when Ayatollah Hasan al-Shirazi issued a fatwa (religious legal ruling) against

⁹ Ibid., 44.

smoking tobacco in 1891. The bazaar was closed in support of the boycott and demonstrations commenced. The boycott was so effective that by 1892 the Shah himself could not even obtain tobacco to smoke in his water pipe in the palace.¹² Domestic pressure coupled with the threat of Russian intervention forced the Shah to revoke the concession. Doing so proved to be so costly that Iran incurred its first foreign debt.¹³

The nineteenth century witnessed more than just Western economic penetration of Iran. Nasir al-Din tried to create a modern army to extend his authority over Iran's unruly tribes and to resist outright conquest by the Russians. Lacking a powerful ally to balance against the Russians, in 1879 he signed a contract with the Russians for officers from the Cossacks to train the Persian Cossack Brigade. This was Iran's first modern, Western-style military. In addition to this indirect penetration, the Russians frequently found pretenses to send troops into Iranian territory. By 1907, the British and Russians reached an agreement that established spheres of influence in Iran. Russia had the right to send troops and maintain advisors in northern Iran, while Britain controlled the southeast near its Indian empire and the southwest province of Khuzistan, where they had by then obtained an oil concession.

If economic and outright military penetration were not enough, Iran also became the subject of cultural penetration. Nasir al-Din sought to selectively incorporate attractive Western institutions and practices without coming under total foreign domination or totally disrupting traditional Iranian society. Along these lines, he founded

¹⁰ Ibid., 44-45.

¹¹ Ibid., 45.

¹² Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr., *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 162.

the Polytechnic College in 1851 with European backing. European instructors came to Iran to instruct its elite in military and technical subjects. Other wealthy Iranians traveled to Europe to receive their educations. These Iranians became the core of an intellectual group that sought to further Westernize their country. One of these influential intellectuals, Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh stated:

We should therefore only strive to retain our milliyat (nationality), that is, our racial identity, language and history, and beyond that seek to pursue the European advancements and civilization without the slightest doubt or hesitation. We must surrender to the Western civilization totally and unconditionally.¹⁴

Others, such as Mirza Malkum Khan, supported this viewpoint by stressing the “need for adoption of European civilization without Iranian adaptation.” One traveler to Great Britain urged his Iranian countrymen that if they “were to adapt the deeds of the British all of their daily matters would be done in the right way.”¹⁵

The Tobacco Protest created a body of activist, politically aware Iranian masses. The Westernized intellectuals mobilized these masses to push for the adoption of a Western-style constitution to limit the arbitrary powers of the Shah. Semisecret societies were formed in favor of constitutionalism. The Shia ulama and the merchants of the bazaars became supporters of this movement.

The Shah continued to exercise his authority in an arbitrary fashion, fanning the flames of the constitutional movement. Shah Mozaffar al-Din’s prime minister, Ayn ud-

¹³ Limbert, 45.

¹⁴ Mehrzad Boroujerdi, “Gharbzadegi: The Dominant Intellectual Discourse of Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Iran,” in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, ed. Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (London: Routledge, 1992), 33.

Dowleh, ordered the flogging of several merchants for refusing to lower their prices on sugar in 1905. The merchants protested that the high import taxes set by the government dictated the higher prices they were charging. The bazaar closed in support and merchants sought refuge in the Shah Abd al-Azim Shrine, which according to the time-honored tradition of *bast* gave them sanctuary from arrest. Ayn ud-Dowleh had the merchants expelled and flogged. The Shah promised to rectify the situation, but took no action. Six months later a mullah was arrested and shot for criticizing the Shah in a Friday sermon. Protests, mass arrests, and violent confrontations followed. In 1906, most of the religious leadership left Tehran for Qom. The bazaar closed and a general strike ensued; thousands of Iranians took refuge in the British Embassy in Tehran.

The Shah agreed to a constitution that established an elected Majlis (Parliament) to limit his authority. Russian and British pressure, coupled with his failing health, forced him to at least pay the new constitution lip service, although he never appointed the upper house of the Majlis and the Majlis was dissolved by his successor in 1915. Foreigners continued to meddle in the day-to-day affairs of Iranian politics. For instance, although the Russians backed the establishment of the constitution, they also backed the succeeding Shah's brief closure of the Majlis in 1908.¹⁶

Foreign economic penetration did not cease during this period. In 1901, Mozaffar al-Din signed a concession with Australian financier William Knox D'Arcy for the exploration for oil. D'Arcy discovered oil in 1908 and organized the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC). The British navy switched from coal to petroleum just before World

¹⁵ Ibid., 32.

War I and the British government purchased a 51 percent share of the company. Iran's precious oil resources were being sold to the British and the profits were going mainly to the British government and private stockholders. The Iranian government received some compensation for the oil, but little of this made its way to impoverished Iranian citizens. Government corruption and foreign influence were already closely connected in the eyes of ordinary Iranians.

During World War I the Ottomans and Russians fought each other on Iranian soil. Iran was virtually powerless to defend its sovereignty in the face of the Great War. Not surprisingly, the political situation in Iran was ripe for change following the war. The British tried to step in with an Anglo-Iranian agreement, but the agreement was never ratified. The British refused to defend Iran against the landing of Bolshevik forces in Gilan in May 1920. It looked as though Iran would be parceled up between the Soviet Union and Great Britain.

On February 21, 1921, Reza Khan Pahlavi led the Persian Cossack Brigade, originally organized by the Russians, to a military coup. Although he was himself an uneducated man, his background in the Cossack Brigade made Reza Khan a modernizing, Westernizing man. A military coup is in itself a Western phenomenon. The Pahlavi dynasty was the first indigenous regime to be established without the support and participation of the tribes and the ulama since the introduction of Islam to Iran. The Pahlavi dynasty based their legitimacy on modernization and used an ideology of Persian nationalism, emphasizing Iran's pre-Islamic past and blaming all of Iran's problems on

¹⁶ Goldschmidt, 177.

the Arab invasion and subsequent Arab influences.

Because he did not owe allegiance to the tribes, Reza Khan, who was crowned and became Reza Shah in 1926, was able to make war on the tribes and consolidate central state authority. He used modern, Western institutions, such as conscription, to destroy the power base of the tribes and replace it with his own power in the form of a modern, Western state army. The Shah pacified all of Iran's independent tribes by 1930.

Reza Shah used his new authority to modernize Iran. The showpiece of his modernization program was the Trans-Iranian railway. Remembering the humiliation of 1892, Reza Shah built the enormous railway entirely with domestic funding. It extended from the Persian Gulf north to the Caspian Sea, even though an east-west railway would have been both cheaper and more useful to Iran.¹⁷ However, the north-south railway was very useful to the Allied war effort after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. It proved to be the only all-weather route for Great Britain and the United States to supply the Soviets. The Shah's pro-German leaning necessitated an Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran to secure the railway. In 1941, Allied forces occupied Iran and Reza Shah abdicated in favor of his son, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.¹⁸

The Anglo-Soviet occupation was legitimized by a tripartite treaty signed on January 29, 1942. The treaty called on Great Britain and the Soviet Union to respect Iran's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence. This included a clause calling for withdrawal from Iran not more than six months after the war's end.¹⁹

¹⁷ M.E. Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1996), 172.

¹⁸ Ibid., 178.

¹⁹ Ibid., 178.

The British (and American) forces withdrew according to the timetable, but almost a year after VE day, Soviet forces were still present in northern Iran. Pressure from Great Britain and the United States, coupled with trickery on the part of Iranian Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam, caused the Soviets to not only withdraw their troops from Iran but also to cease supporting their separatist clients in the Kurdistan and Azerbaijan provinces.²⁰

The occupation and the change of government shattered the central government that Reza Shah had labored for 20 years to build. Tribal and religious leaders sought to re-assert their traditional authority. The intellectuals, with their liberal-nationalist program, reappeared and flocked to the banner of the National Front, a coalition of political parties. Although a small number of socialist nationalists existed before the Anglo-Soviet occupation, Communists in Iran received a great deal of support and patronage from the Soviets during the war. The Tudeh Party, which became Iran's dominant Communist party, formed under the auspices of the Soviet occupation. These parties vied for power against each other and against the traditionalist force the tribes and the ulama represented. The one factor all of these factions had in common was their hatred and distrust of foreigners, especially after the recent Anglo-Soviet occupation and continued British domination of Iran's oil sector.

It was under these circumstances that Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq rose to leadership of the National Front. Under popular and religious pressure, the Majlis voted to nationalize Iran's oil industry on March 20, 1951. Dr. Mossadeq was selected as prime minister in May to implement the nationalization. Because he was anti-foreign, he

²⁰ Ibid., 181-183.

initially received widespread support. It soon became apparent, however, that Mossadeq was trying to enact regime change and implement radical policies. This alienated his conservative supporters who dominated the Majlis: landowners, ulama, and wealthy merchants. Regime changes usually undermined private property rights,²¹ and Mossadeq's rhetoric and actions did little to reassure his former backers about his intentions. Most of the coalition members wanted limits placed on the arbitrary powers of the Shah and to increase their share of power but opposed a complete change in government. By July 1953, 10 out of the 20 founding members of the National Front had defected to the pro-Shah camp.²²

A confrontation between Mossadeq and the Shah ensued in 1953. From the time Mossadeq became prime minister until the summer of 1953, the Shah first tried obstructing Mossadeq through passive resistance. For example, rather than allow him to nationalize crown lands, the Shah began distributing them to the peasant tenants over Mossadeq's objections.²³ The Shah hoped that his passive resistance would force Mossadeq to assume a dictatorial role, in contradiction to all of his previous anti-dictator rhetoric aimed at the Shah.²⁴

Mossadeq realized that his support base in the Majlis was rapidly waning, so he turned to street demonstrations to intimidate his opponents and increase his own power.²⁵

²¹ Fatemeh E. Moghadam, "State, Political Stability and Property Rights," in *Iran After the Revolution: Crisis of an Islamic State*, ed. Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 46.

²² Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 106.

²³ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1952-1954*, vol. X, *Iran* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 680.

²⁴ Ibid., 716.

²⁵ Ibid., 719.

Mossadeq ordered all National Front Majlis Deputies to resign (except for Speaker Moazami) on July 14, preventing the Majlis from obtaining a quorum.²⁶ As the Communists specialized in mobilizing people and “street politics,” Mossadeq turned to the Tudeh Party for support instead of the Majlis. This further alienated the more conservative factions in Iran and provided the British and the Americans with the pretext they needed to rid Iran of Mossadeq.

On August 4, 1953, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower said he “would take the necessary steps to stop Iran from going behind the Iron Curtain.”²⁷ After weeks of rumors and reports that the Shah, Major General Fazlollah Zahidi, and the United States were planning a coup to remove Mossadeq, on August 8 the Tudeh Party press declared that the Shah planned a military coup. The Shah and his queen went to Ramsar on the Caspian Sea on August 11. On August 15, Colonel Nasiri delivered a royal firman, signed by the Shah on August 13, to Mossadeq relieving him of his position as prime minister, in accordance with the Shah’s constitutional powers. Mossadeq disregarded the firman and had Nasiri arrested.²⁸

On the same day, the Imperial Guard was to occupy the general staff and police headquarters, along with the Tehran Radio Station at the same time, but junior officers sympathetic to the Tudeh Party disrupted the plan. The next day, the radio announced the failure of the coup and demanded the establishment of a republic. The Shah and his queen left the country for Baghdad. On August 17 crowds organized by the Tudeh Party destroyed statues and pictures of the Shah and his father. Mossadeq’s opposition,

²⁶ Ibid., 736.

however, published photos of the firman and accused Mossadeq of rebellion. Mossadeq claimed he had no knowledge of the firman and stated he would not obey it in any case.²⁹

On August 18 the Tudeh Party demonstrated in favor of the establishment of a Democratic Republic. Mossadeq informed the U.S. Ambassador Henderson that he dissolved the Majlis on July 14 because the British had bought the votes of its members.³⁰ The next day, demonstrators paid and organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) demonstrated in favor of the Shah. The crowds attacked Tudeh and pro-Mossadeq offices, as well as the newspapers. They captured the Tehran Radio Station and announced a government headed by General Zahidi. On August 22, the Shah returned.³¹

It can be seen from this incident that Mossadeq had plenty of internal opposition. The British did not need to buy the votes of the Majlis as most of its members opposed Mossadeq by the summer of 1953. Although the CIA and SIS did distribute money to help organize pro-Shah demonstrations, there were plenty of Iranians willing to demonstrate for him. Therefore, the Shah's coup was not entirely engineered by foreign forces. However, the involvement of the United States and Great Britain was undeniable. This was seen as especially scandalous because the British were still negotiating an end to the oil crisis sparked by the Mossadeq government's nationalization of oil. Naturally, after the Shah returned to office with British assistance, a resolution to the crisis acceptable to the British was found. This was perhaps the darkest moment for

²⁷ Ibid., 781.

²⁸ Ibid., 782.

²⁹ Ibid., 751.

³⁰ Ibid., 750.

the United States in the eyes of many Iranians. A country founded in a rebellion against colonialism, British colonialism no less, interfered with Iran's domestic politics in favor of Great Britain.

The United States gave Iran generous loans after the Shah's reinstatement to tide over the Iranian economy until the oil crisis was resolved. Throughout Eisenhower's administration the policy of bolstering the Shah almost without question continued, as Iran was considered an essential element of the "Northern Tier" against the spread of Soviet Communism.

This policy was originally adopted under President Harry Truman's administration. In 1951, the Iranian government informed the U.S. government that, as a weak power near the Soviet Union, it was unable to clearly align with the United States and against the Soviets. This clear alignment was required to receive military, economic, and technical aid under the provisions of the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951 and the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949. However, providing this type of aid was considered essential in keeping Iran in the Western bloc, therefore other laws were found that allowed the provision of aid. It was not U.S. policy to go to such great lengths for other countries that refused to clearly align themselves against the Soviets.³²

This policy changed under President John Kennedy. Kennedy rightly gauged that he could threaten to withhold aid without driving the Iranians into the Soviet camp. In the words of an influential National Security Council staff member, Robert W. Komer,

³¹ Ibid., 784-786.

³² Ibid., 295-297.

"he [the Shah] needs us and knows it."³³ There is still a common misconception today, even among American scholars, that the Shah announced the White Revolution under pressure from Kennedy regarding human rights issues and political liberalization. During a meeting between the Shah and Kennedy in April 1962, Kennedy assented when the Shah stated he hoped that Kennedy would understand that he could not "do everything in an absolutely legal way."³⁴ Furthermore, Kennedy's ambassador to Iran was not only unconcerned by the Shah's violent repression of the riots in the first week of June 1963, but he even went so far as to say, "It was a mistake to delay the use of weapons by the troops the first day. This mistake will not be repeated on future occasions."³⁵ Nor was the administration pressing the Shah in the arena of political liberalization:

Even to press the Shah prematurely toward new elections and a Majlis is an invitation to chaos in a country like Iran; these are not a stabilizing institution or even a safety valve. ... Iran simply is not ready yet for democratic consensus.³⁶

However, Kennedy was pressuring the Shah to undertake internal reform. Kennedy's administration considered economic and social reform "to be of *overriding* importance [emphasis in original]."³⁷ Specifically, the pressure was put on for economic development, moderate land reform, anti-corruption, better revenue collection, government bureaucracy reform, better public relations, reducing the military, and

³³ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XVIII: *Near East: 1962-1963* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995), 193.

³⁴ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XVII: *Near East: 1961-1962* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), 609.

³⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XVIII, 601.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XVII, 581.

appointing reform-minded cabinets like that of Amini's.³⁸ Surprising the Kennedy administration, however, the Shah declared the Revolution of the Shah and People, later known as the White Revolution on January 9, 1963. The White Revolution included radical land reform, public ownership of industries, nationalization of forests, voting rights for women, workers' profit sharing, and a literacy corps for rural areas. A brief period of political liberalization was also in progress when the White Revolution was announced. Obviously, there was not much direct congruence between the Shah's plan and Kennedy's goals, signifying that the Shah was probably responding more to domestic pressures than foreign interference.

When the Shah's father, Reza Shah, sought to strip tribal leaders of their power and restrict the influence of the ulama, he had to rely upon the large landowners in Iran for support. Landowners came to dominate the Majlis, especially after 1928, and Reza Shah continued to curry favor with them through such means as the abolition of the land tax in 1934.³⁹

Initially, Mohammad Reza Shah followed in his father's footsteps in this regard. However, since the Pahlavi regime's legitimacy was based upon a program of modernization, the conservative landowners soon became a limiting factor for the young Shah. After the Mossadeq affair, the Shah increased his reliance upon another traditional Pahlavi pillar, the army. He began engaging in a large military build up to bolster the strength of this pillar. He took this reliance upon the state's coercive powers to the next step. He founded the infamous National Organization for Intelligence and Security

³⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XVIII, 193.

(Sazman-e Ettela 'at Va Amniyat-e Keshvar or SAVAK) with American and Israeli help in 1957. The organization became notorious for its suppression of internal dissent using various methods including imprisonment, torture and assassination. In addition, he bolstered the National Police and the Gendarmerie so that by the 1970s they numbered 40,000 and 25,000, respectively.⁴⁰

By increasing the state's coercive powers and his reliance upon them, the Shah felt confident that he could eliminate the conservative landowners from among his supporters. Although they had been loyal supporters in the past, his more conservative followers were beginning to slow down the Shah's modernization and development plans. The White Revolution used techniques tried in many other developing Middle Eastern states to break the power of the traditional leaders and centralize all power and authority in the state. Land redistribution is probably the most obvious example of this. In this case, however, the Shah went even further. The literacy corps was yet another step taken to reduce the influence of the ulama. Traditionally, most rural Iranians received what little education they had at the hands of the ulama. The literacy corps gave the state the ability to tread into this "sacred" territory and displace the ulama from their educational role. Women's suffrage was also a blow toward conservative factions in Iran, especially the clergy.

Not surprisingly then, most of the conservative elements in Iran virulently opposed these reforms and succeeded in mobilizing the masses in opposition to the Shah. The perception, and partly the reality, that the Shah was engaging in these reforms at the

³⁹ Yapp, 175.

behest at the United States was a liability for him until his overthrow. The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini gave a speech addressing the White Revolution shortly before his exile from Iran in 1964. He stated that the White Revolution did nothing to modernize the villages of Iran or even cities such as Qom. He stated “Islam is destroyed!” as a result of the White Revolution. He focused especially on the capitulations that granted U.S. personnel extraterritorial status, “If an American runs over me with his car, no one will have the right to say anything to him!” For Khomeini and other conservatives like him, the White Revolution was clearly part of an American conspiracy to “enslave” Iranians:

America is worse than Britain; Britain is worse than America. The Soviet Union is worse than both of them. They are all worse and more unclean than each other! But today it is America that we are concerned with.⁴¹

To many, if not most Iranians the White Revolution was therefore depicted as the result of foreign pressures and possibly even a foreign conspiracy. The Shah might well have taken similar steps with no external stimulus, especially judging from the course of other Middle Eastern states during this same period. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed great secular revolutions throughout the Middle East that included programs such as land reform. These movements resulted in the decline of former landowners and religious leaders and the rise of the state. In every Middle Eastern state in which this occurred “the

⁴⁰ John M. Hoopes, “The Focus of the Iranian Intelligence Community Since 1957” (Master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1997), 15-16.

⁴¹ Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1981), 185.

main motor of change has been internal.”⁴² Therefore, what is important to understand is not the reality, but rather the popular perception that the Shah was the puppet of foreign powers who all had self-serving intentions and wanted nothing more than Iran’s destruction or “enslavement.”

A large US presence continued in Iran after the White Revolution, representing all facets of life from military advisers to businessmen and scholars. In the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Arabs organized an oil boycott that succeeded in driving up the price of oil, 400 percent in Iran’s case.⁴³ The Shah began pouring even more money into military expenditures, reaching 25 percent of total government expenditures by 1978.⁴⁴ Hordes of foreign specialists flocked to Iran to take advantage of new business opportunities; a small number of Iranians benefited from the oil boom while the majority suffered the consequences of inflation and rapid urbanization. In 1976 the price of oil dropped, but the Shah continued to spend money as if nothing had changed. This was because 1976 was when the Shah found out he was dying of cancer, but kept his sickness secret from even his closest advisers. He intended to complete the White Revolution by October 1979 so he could hand over many of his powers to his son, Reza Shah, when he reached the age of majority in 1980.⁴⁵ Widespread unemployment resulting from economic dislocation caused many of the Shah’s former supporters to protest against his apparent lack of connection with events happening outside of his palace.

⁴² Yapp, 3.

⁴³ “Iran: Country Report,” in *Global Studies: The Middle East*, 6th ed., ed. William Spencer (Guilford, CT: Dushkin Publishing Group, 1996), 60.

⁴⁴ Hoopes, 10.

⁴⁵ Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America’s Tragic Encounter with Iran* (New York, NY: Random House, 1985), 23.

Once again, the root of these new evils appeared to be the West, especially the United States. The Shah was purchasing extravagant American weaponry when the poor were living in slums around Tehran. Many Americans made their fortunes from Iranian oil wealth—those Iranians who benefited from it had Western educations, adopted Western dress, and indulged in Western practices. The thousands of unemployed rural immigrants to the cities, particularly Tehran, were confronted by an unfamiliar urban setting replete with Western cinemas and unIslamic Western practices such as gambling, drinking, and prostitution. The fact that all developing, industrializing states go through a similar process did not matter. Rather, the perception was that the West was enriching itself from Iran's resources and hard work while exporting its corruption and unraveling traditional Iranian society.

The Iranian revolution began with street demonstrations in November 1977. A cycle of violence ensued with demonstrations followed by repression, followed in turn by demonstrations marking the deaths of those killed in the previous demonstrations, followed again by further repression. However, the Shah, sick with cancer and unable to commit to a decisive course of action, mixed violent repression with attempts at conciliation. By October 1978 opposition strikes paralyzed Iranian industry, including the essential oil industry. The government began to break down by December 1978. The Shah left the country on January 16, 1979, eventually taking refuge in the United States in October 1979, adding to the apparent evidence that America was still plotting against the Iranian people. On February 1, 1979, Khomeini returned to Iran from exile and became the leader of Iran. An Islamic Republic was founded that was "neither East nor

West" but rather sought to chart a course for Iran based on indigenous principles and values.

Even during the height of the revolution, the insidious hand of America was seen behind all of Iran's troubles. The Islamic Republic's first elected president, Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, was convinced that Khomeini and U.S. President Ronald Reagan were in league together in some kind of conspiracy. On the one hand, the Americans supported the clerical regime. Bani-Sadr quoted Reagan adviser Michael Ledeen as saying,

One, we believe that the Iranian regime is stable. Two, it is not acting contrary to American interests. Three, we will not assist any coup d'etat against it.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the American government sought to destroy the Khomeini regime by giving Iraq the green light to invade Iran on September 22, 1980.⁴⁷ In fact, virtually every domestic disturbance was part of a pre-planned American counter-revolutionary plot allegedly detailed by documents found in the military's archives and in the American embassy in the wake of the embassy seizure.⁴⁸ Although U.S. policy may at times lack clarity and consistency, it seems beyond the realm of reason for one man (Bani-Sadr) to see the U.S. government both supporting and destroying the Iranian government at the same time.

This situation is further complicated by the fact that Bani-Sadr did not speak for everyone, but rather there were many factions, each with its own perception and each accusing its opponents of being American stooges. Bani-Sadr's opponents, for instance,

⁴⁶ Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr, *My Turn to Speak* (Washington, DC: Brassey's (US) Inc., 1991), 38.

published a reconstructed document taken from the U.S. Embassy's shredder that they said proved he was an American spy. Bani-Sadr used this same document to confirm his own integrity and prove the United States tried to corrupt Third World leaders.⁴⁹ Even if the United States took no sides during the revolution, in this environment the perception was that America was the bogeyman hiding behind every bush. Perhaps it is no surprise that so many Iranians shouted "Death to America!" and burned the American flag in this environment.

The seizure of the American Embassy in November 1979 is an excellent example of the complexity of this situation. From the foreign influence/domination point of view, the seizure of the Embassy was a spontaneous reaction by Iranian students to the sanctuary provided to the Shah by the United States in October. The Embassy was seen by many Iranians as "a den of spies and engineered plots against the Islamic Republic."⁵⁰ This was the very reasoning espoused by Khamenei for why he will "never allow American statesmen to set foot on Iranian soil."⁵¹ Khatami agreed with Khamenei's analysis that the Embassy takeover was a reaction to foreign intervention: "This was the crying out of the people against humiliations and inequities imposed upon them by the policies of the U.S. and others."⁵²

Others, such as Bani-Sadr, viewed the Embassy seizure in terms of domestic politics. The seizure of the Embassy was not a spontaneous act but rather one planned to

⁴⁷ Ibid., 70.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 67-68.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 169.

⁵⁰ (Untitled), *Tehran Times*, 17 Jan 1998; available from <http://netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

⁵¹ Ibid.

enhance the power of the mullah's faction. He claimed it caused the fall of Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, a moderate opposed to clerical rule, from government. The actual reason stated for his dismissal from the government was because he was "plotting" with the West by meeting with U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski in Algiers on November 1, 1979 to discuss future relations and the presence of the Shah in the United States.⁵³ The takeover was engineered to draw attention away from the mullah's increasing encroachment on democratic rights and values.

The proof of this theory for Bani-Sadr was in the crisis' resolution. The hostages were released on the day Reagan was inaugurated president in return for an alleged arms deal negotiated without Bani-Sadr's approval. The very next day Ayatollah Mohammad Husseini Beheshti, the leader of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), stated,

We have found our way, our people have found their way, the State has found its way, and this unified whole is working in coordination. The hostage problem had to be resolved eventually.⁵⁴

Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani, another leading cleric, stated on January 22,

Parliament, the government, and the judiciary are all working together with the Imam [Khomeini], and we are unanimous in saying that if the hostages had not been taken, the United States would have found some other way of forcing the Iraqis to attack.⁵⁵

Clearly, the implication is that the real motivation for the seizure was to eliminate Bani-Sadr and bolster the clerical faction. The foreign intervention of the United States was

⁵² "Transcript of Interview with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami," 7.

⁵³ Sick, 189.

⁵⁴ Bani-Sadr, 48.

only a pretext in Bani-Sadr's mind.

The history of foreign interference so influenced the revolution's leaders in 1979 that Chapter X of the Islamic Republic's constitution, "Foreign Policy," is devoted to articles repudiating foreign control and interference. The first article of Chapter X, Article 152, states, "The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it...."⁵⁶ The next article is entitled "No Foreign Control."⁵⁷ The Iranian leaders were not content to fight against foreign domination only in Iran. Part of the "export of Revolution" policy that developed early on was supporting militant groups in other states opposed to Western states or policies. The third article in Chapter X therefore states that the Islamic Republic "supports the just struggles of freedom fighters against the oppressors in every corner of the globe."⁵⁸

Whatever the truth of the U.S. role in Iran from 1977 until the mullahs were firmly established in power by the end of 1982, clear evidence exists of U.S. intervention in Iranian politics after that time. Once pro-Iranian terrorists had seized American hostages in Lebanon, the Reagan administration placed a priority on securing their release. The Israelis, who had been supplying Iran with arms and spare parts since Iraq's invasion of Iran, proposed in May 1985 that the United States assist Israel in supplying

⁵⁵ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁶ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 152; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir011.html>; Internet.

⁵⁷ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 153; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir014.html>; Internet.

⁵⁸ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 154; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir014.html>; Internet.

the crucial American-made goods required by Iran's armed forces.⁵⁹ This was initially intended to improve intelligence about Iran. The Reagan administration quickly turned this into an opportunity to secure the release of the hostages, bolster the "moderate" faction within the Iranian government, improve relations, and even arrange a high-level government-to-government dialogue.⁶⁰ Although three hostages were released, three more were seized by Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon.⁶¹ Intelligence was gathered on various factions within the Iranian government and a relatively moderate faction was identified. However, the arms that were shipped in an attempt to bolster that faction were often intercepted by the "radicals" and diverted to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) instead of the regular forces.⁶² The American delegation arrived in Tehran on May 25, 1986 and spent three and a half days negotiating with the Iranian delegation. The meeting turned out to be unsuccessful.⁶³ The Iranians leaked information about the meeting to *Al-Shiraa*, a Lebanese publication. Speaker of the Majlis, Hashemi Rafsanjani, acknowledged the meeting took place. The ensuing publicity marred the record of the Reagan Administration, especially in light of the U.S.-led international arms embargo of Iran.

Further U.S. attempts to intervene in Iranian affairs included \$20 million Congress initially earmarked for covert action to overthrow the Islamic Republic's government in 1995. After suffering severe public criticism, the legislation was modified

⁵⁹ U.S., Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit, *Final Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran/Contra Matters Volume 1*, prepared by Lawrence E. Walsh (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 10.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁶¹ Ibid., 10.

⁶² Samuel Segev, *The Iranian Triangle* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1988), 174.

to state the money was to “alter Iran’s behavior.”⁶⁴ The policy of Dual Containment, first espoused by the Clinton Administration in 1993 is another example. U.S. companies and individuals are generally forbidden from doing business with Iran under this policy. The containment of Iran has become law in the *Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996* (ILSA). This law prohibits foreign companies or banks from investing in Iran’s oil sector beyond a \$40 million limit. The purpose of the law is to counter the “efforts of the Government of Iran to acquire weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them and its support of international terrorism” as well as Iran’s opposition to the Middle East peace process.⁶⁵

From the Iranian point of view, issues such as defense and relations with Israel are internal matters. For the United States to not only prohibit its own people from doing business, but to go further and effect sanctions on anyone who does is clearly an attempt to unnecessarily dominate Iran’s domestic affairs. Many Iranians feel they are treated unfairly by the United States. The following are some points articulated by a professor at Shiraz Islamic Azad University:

North Korea, rated worst of the world’s human rights violators, has been an enemy of the United States since more than 30 thousand American soldiers died there in the Korean War, but it received Clinton’s support in the form of an offer for free South Korean nuclear reactors. While North Korea remains opposed to International Atomic Energy Agency inspections, Iran has agreed to such inspections. Yet, the United States threatened to eliminate American foreign aid to Russia if Russia sells nuclear reactors to Iran for \$800 million.

⁶³ *Final Report of the Independent Counsel for Iran/Contra Matters Volume 1*, 21.

⁶⁴ Colin MacKinnon, “Iran Sanctions: Dual Containment Gets Teeth,” *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (April 1996): 91.

⁶⁵ House Committee on Ways and Means, *Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996: Report to Accompany H.R. 3107*, 104th Congress, 2nd sess., 1996, H. Rept. 104-523 Part 2, 2.

Some 60,000 American soldiers died fighting a communist North Vietnamese government, yet Clinton fought to restore diplomatic relations with that same Vietnamese government in August 1995...the Iranian government eventually returned all of the American hostages unharmed, and yet the U.S. government has made no overtures toward restoring diplomatic relations.

China continues underground nuclear testing. Yet the U.S. has full diplomatic representation in China and extensive trade relations with that country. Twenty million Chinese work in slave labor camps, and men outnumber women because of female infanticide and abortions...Iran, a non-communist country, has no nuclear weapons and practices traditional family values, but the U.S. has unilaterally declared an embargo on trade with Iran.⁶⁶

Clearly then, the United States and all of its close allies are viewed with suspicion by Iran. All Western practices and values are likewise viewed with similar suspicion. Given Iran's history of foreign domination it is particularly sensitive to these issues. Perhaps this is why the Iranian government is so opposed to the existence of Israel. They see it as Europeans (the early Zionists were almost exclusively European in origin) colonizing, even invading a Middle Eastern state and driving out or enslaving the native people. Majlis Deputy Seyed Ahmad Rasouli Nejad accused the American civilization of being "built on the values of those robbers and convicts who were banished from Europe to America and massacred native Americans."⁶⁷ There is a clear parallel in these events for some Iranians. This is not to suggest that the Iranian-Israeli situation is not more complex, but even this issue can be understood and predicted based on knowledge of only the foreign domination factor. Even the Shah's otherwise pro-Western government took a somewhat distant approach to Israel. Although Iran under the Shah maintained de

⁶⁶ Paul Foote, "Iran: 'Neither East nor West,'" *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (April 1996): 82 & 87.

⁶⁷ M. Serjooie, "Majlis Deputy: We Abide by Orders of the Leader," *Iran News*, 16 January 1998;

facto relations with Israel, de jure relations were never extended. Many of the Iranian-Israeli contacts were kept secret or at least low profile. The Shah frequently came out in favor of Israel's Arab neighbors in his rhetoric. The Islamic Republic's relations with Israel have been far worse, although certain secret contacts continue, such as the Iran/Contra Affair referenced previously.

One might even go so far as to say the Shah's pro-Western leaning was the major reason for his downfall in 1979. His opposition successfully painted a portrait of him as a Western puppet. They blamed all of Iran's problems on Western influence and called for a return to traditional Iranian values such as Islam. Such views strongly shape the policies of those in the government who lived under the Shah, and they also affect the voting preferences of older Iranians.

However, younger Iranians have had a different experience. It is significant to note that most of Iran's population was born since the revolution. 60 percent of Iran's population is under the age of 18.⁶⁸ The voting age in Iran is 15, so many of these young people expressed their sentiments in last May's presidential election when Khatami captured "the 40 percent of the electorate too young to remember either the Shah or the revolution... ."⁶⁹ This is not to say that decades, even centuries of foreign interference and domination will be forgotten, even by the youth. After all, it would be unreasonable to discount a lifetime of propaganda, not to mention the lessons of "objective" history. Rather, one can reasonably expect the youth's antipathy toward foreigners and especially

available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

⁶⁸ Dariush Zahedi and Ahmad Ghoreishi, "Iran's Security Concerns in the Persian Gulf," *Naval War College Review* XLIX, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 76.

⁶⁹ "Tired of Revolution," *The Times*, 26 May 1997, Features Section; available from LEXIS-

the West to be more abstract and more flexible than that of older Iranians.

Although the United States and its attempts to isolate Iran are still blamed for many of Iran's ills, most young Iranians have seen little concrete evidence of this. Rather, they grew up experiencing an Iran that had difficulty attracting foreign investment, planning poorly, and engaging in counterproductive policies. The population growth rate is at a staggering 2.29 percent, which correlates to a fertility rate of 4.93 children per woman. This corresponds with a dismal real GNP "growth" of -2 percent. Unemployment is estimated at over 30 percent, a disproportionate amount of which applies to the youth. Although the estimated inflation rate, between 35 and 60 percent, and the external debt, \$30 billion, are not the worst in the third world, they are not improving Iran's economic situation either.⁷⁰

The future looks equally bleak. In 1974, under the Shah, the per capita share of Iran's oil and gas exports was \$578. In 1996, due to the increasing population and declining price and quantity of oil exports, the per capita share of oil and gas exports had decreased to \$317. Even after non-oil exports are added to this, it was still only a per capita share of \$370, less than oil and gas alone under the Shah. Assuming current trends continue, by the year 2020 the per capita share of oil and gas exports will have dropped to \$150.⁷¹ President Khatami even predicted that Iran would become a net importer of oil within 15 years if current conditions, that is the lack of investment, persist.⁷² Natural gas

NEXIS.

⁷⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, *The 1995 World Factbook*, available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

⁷¹ "A Tzar for Non-Oil Exports," *Iran News*, 5 Jan 97; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

⁷² House International Relations Committee, *ILSA's First Year: What Effect on Iran and on Allied Policy Toward Iran?*, paper prepared by Patrick Clawson (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing

is not a short-term fix either, as “production, processing and transfer of gas is difficult and requires enormous capital” and “the price of gas in international markets is not high enough to warrant heavy investment.”⁷³

The current economic crisis is forcing those in power to reconsider Iran’s relations with the West. This includes the policy of exporting revolution, lack of ties with the United States, and Iran’s closed nature to foreigners in general, including foreign business interests. However, centuries of foreign domination and exploitation are not easily forgotten. Any opening to the West will be slow, cautious, and fraught with pitfalls, both for those actors within Iran making the overtures to the West and to those in the West encouraging them. The door may be opening in the near future to increased relations with the West and the United States, but only if these relations are perceived as a “partnership” and not more “exploitation.” The following chapters will further illuminate this situation from the Islamic and institutional perspectives and how each respectively impacts the foreign policy process in Iran.

Office, 1997); available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

⁷³ “Since,” *Iran News*, 16 Jan 98; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

III. ISLAM AND THE FOREIGN POLICY PROCESS

In December 1997 Iran hosted the 8th summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a body with 55 member states. Twenty-eight heads of state, in addition to prime ministers, foreign ministers and 20 regional and international organizations participated in the summit.⁷⁴ Palestinian President Yasser Arafat attended although he has been criticized in the past by the Iranian government for his peace accord with Israel. Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed Al-Sabah of Kuwait attended, despite the fact that Iran deliberately attacked Kuwaiti oil tankers during the Iran-Iraq war. Saudi Crown Prince Amir Abdullah was welcomed by President Khatami and accorded the respect due a head of state even though Iran and Saudi Arabia have been fiercely competing for leadership in the Islamic world and for hegemony in the Persian/Arabian Gulf. Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan was the highest-ranking Iraqi to visit Iran since the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Christian Lebanese President Elias Hrawi and his Muslim Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri, also attended. Egypt sent a delegation at the foreign minister level just one month after both Egypt and Saudi Arabia had avoided the U.S.-sponsored conference in Qatar to promote Arab-Israeli economic ties.

Iran has always used Islam to promote its foreign policy and to forge ties with other Muslim groups or states. The above example demonstrates how Iran was able to end its virtual isolation and become involved in international relations on a global scale once again through Islam. This came despite efforts by the United States to isolate Iran

⁷⁴ "Al-Azhar: Tehran Islamic Summit Makes Islamic Voice Heard in World," *Iran News*, 16 Jan

and by Iran's own recent history of "exporting revolution" that formerly earned the hostility and distrust of many Islamic states.

Given the current nature of the Islamic Republic, Islam also affects foreign policy by creating the "rules of the game." These rules limit some policies while promoting others. Understanding these rules will help an outside observer look through the rhetoric and see the real issues at stake. Before the direct or indirect impact of Islam on Iranian foreign policy can be addressed, however, a brief look must be taken at the history of Islam in Iran and the manner it has evolved on the political scene.

Islam first came to Iran following the famous battle of al-Qadisiya in October 636. The Sassanid King Yazdagrid III deployed a large force to attack the Muslims who had recently advanced to al-Qadisiya. The Muslims won a decisive victory over the more numerous Sassanids, and from then until 671 the Sassanids were on the defensive. In 671, Khurasan was the last of the Persian provinces to fall to invading Muslim armies.⁷⁵

Most of the conquered Persians did not convert to Islam immediately. Since the time of Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Khattab (634-644) Muslim troops were kept separate from the conquered populations to keep them from becoming "corrupted" by local customs and practices. It was in this way that garrison towns like Basra, Kufah, and Fustat, were set up outside of existing population centers.⁷⁶ Local government and administration was virtually unchanged except that the top position was filled by a Muslim conqueror.

This laissez-faire policy changed under Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685-705). He

1998; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

introduced Arabic as the official language of administration during the 690s. He built grand public buildings, including the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount of Jerusalem. This was an unmistakable message to subject Christians and Jews that Islam was there to stay. Despite these changes, conquered peoples were not generally forced to convert and it was not until about the tenth century that most of the conquered peoples had converted to Islam.⁷⁷

It was also during the tenth century when the madrasa system (the Islamic education system) was established in Iran.⁷⁸ The development of Islam in Iran had a major, if short-lived setback during the Mongol invasions. By 1260, the Mongol conquests had so shattered Islamic governments that “Islamic power stood at the precipice: one more significant Mongol victory, and Islam as a political power would be finished.”⁷⁹ However, the Mongols did not win another major victory in the Middle East, only defeat at Ayn Jalut. Ghazan, the pretender to the vacant position of Ilkhan of Persia, converted to Islam in 1295 to shore up his legitimacy, and most of his generals followed suit.⁸⁰ In the absence of any organized Islamic power, Sufism (gnostic, individualistic Islam) became widespread in Iran, although still of the Sunni variety.

The next major landmark for Islam in Iran was in 1501 when Shah Ismail Safavi established the Safavid dynasty in Iran. He established Twelver Shi’ism as the official

⁷⁵ John W. Jandora, *The March from Medina* (Clifton, NJ: Kingston Press, Inc., 1990), 94.

⁷⁶ Goldschmidt, 51.

⁷⁷ Richard Fletcher, *Moorish Spain* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1992), 106.

⁷⁸ Rasool Nafisi, “Education and the Culture of Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, ed. Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (London: Routledge, 1992), 164.

⁷⁹ Robert Marshall, *Storm From the East* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 188.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 228.

religion of Iran. Until that time, Twelver Shi'ism had been a minority faith in Iran.⁸¹ A major reason Shah Ismail chose this formerly obscure sect to unite the country was to compete with the Sunni Ottomans who claimed their sultan was the caliph of Islam and who were contending with Shah Ismail for the northwestern part of Iran.⁸² This was an early example of the link between foreign policy and Islam. The Twelver Shia system was able to absorb the popular Sunni Sufism and restore orthodoxy.

The Shias believe that the Islamic community had been rightly guided by a series of Imams who descended from the Prophet Muhammad. The Twelvers, the largest Shia sect, believe that the twelfth and last Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, went into occultation (seclusion) around 874-878 and that he will return someday to rule with justice and righteousness. The early Shia ulama (10th-13th centuries) taught that in the Mahdi's absence there could be no congregational Friday prayers, holy war, or the collection of religious taxes. During the 10th century, the Shia doctor Ibn Babuya made it obligatory for Shias to serve whatever unjust government they found themselves under until the return of the Mahdi. The eighth Imam himself was quoted as saying, "Verily, he who stands up against a tyrannical ruler, and a calamity thereby befalls him, shall have no reward for it..."⁸³ They believed in a strict-constructionist approach, rejecting Greek rationalism. They believed that only the Imams could be emulated, not jurisprudents. In short, they were political quietists advocating a withdrawal from the world until the return of the Mahdi. They became known as Akhbaris.

⁸¹ Limbert, 44.

⁸² Nafisi, 170.

⁸³ Ahmad ibn Wadih al-Ya'qubi, *Tarikh* {The History}, trans. M.E. Ayati (Tehran, 1977), 2:472; quoted in Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago, IL: The University of

Starting in the late 14th century, the Usulis appeared. They believed the Shia religious leaders, the ulama, have the right to guide the umma, the Islamic community, and to perform ijтиhad (interpretation) in the Mahdi's absence. Laypersons had to emulate the senior clerics (the mujtahid). It was the Usulis who sought appointments in the Safavid Empire to further their activist beliefs. These Shia ulama were therefore in Shah Ismail's debt, as he established them in positions of power and influence in Iran. Shah Ismail claimed descent from one of the Imams, to be the deputy of the Mahdi, the Shadow of God on Earth, and asserted both religious and temporal authority. The ulama readily accepted this state of affairs and eagerly sought government appointments.⁸⁴

Despite Safavid co-optation, however, the Shias continued to affirm that the Imam was the only legitimate ruler. Therefore, any temporal ruler who existed, even Shah Ismail, was only accepted as necessary to preserve public order until the Mahdi's promised return. The Usuli departure from Akbarism became very radical that during the reign of the Safavid monarch Abbas II, a noted secularist who regularly and conspicuously violated Islamic law. Some Usulis went so far as to declare a mujtahid was more qualified to rule than any king.⁸⁵ Although this belief did not gain much ground at that time, the temporary and illegitimate nature of temporal power in general remained important in Shi'ism.

Before Shah Ismail, the Shia ulama generally had a poor relationship with rulers. They were a minority in the early Islamic community. Their choice of leader, 'Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, was not selected as Caliph until three others, selected by Sunnis,

Chicago Press, 1984), 58.

preceded him. Many of ‘Ali’s followers became disaffected with his rule, and he was murdered by a former follower (a Kharijite) in 661. ‘Ali was the only ruler of Iran who could also be considered a Shia clergymen (in this case, an Imam) before Khomeini.

‘Ali’s son, Husayn, rebelled against the Sunni Umayyad dynasty which had replaced ‘Ali. Husayn’s allies betrayed him shortly before battle—he and his followers were destroyed. From that time until the Safavid dynasty there were few Shia rulers anywhere in the Muslim world. Where they did occur, they usually ruled over small, insignificant areas or for relatively short periods of time, except for Fatimid North Africa (909-1171). However, there were few lasting converts to Shi’ism in Egypt under the Fatamids. It was only in the corners of the Muslim world that Shias won any converts. Therefore, Shias usually perceived themselves as the oppressed, waiting for the Mahdi to return and deliver them from an unrighteous world. This explains the Shia ulama’s eager endorsement of Shah Ismail on the one hand, and their reservations about all forms of temporal government on the other.

The Sunni Afghans, formerly under Iranian rule, conquered Iran in 1722. The conflict was sparked by Shah Sultan Husayn’s attempts to forcibly convert the Afghans to Twelver Shi’ism.⁸⁴ Naturally, the importance of the Shia ulama waned under resentful foreign Sunni rule. Many ulama sought patronage from the bazaar merchants to replace lost royal patronage. The Akhbaris rose in importance during this period of foreign rule, as activism was not really possible. After a period of relative anarchy within Iran, the

⁸⁴ Goldschmidt, 82.

⁸⁵ Arjomand, 185.

⁸⁶ Ralph Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx and Mujahid* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 34.

eunuch Agha Mohammad Khan of the Qajar tribe reunited Iran and established his capital in the village of Tehran, proclaiming himself shahanshah (king of kings) in 1796.⁸⁷ The Shah shared power with the Shia ulama, giving them exclusive control of the judiciary and education.⁸⁸ The ulama not only maintained their autonomy under the Qajars, but they increased their power and wealth. It was during the nineteenth century that the ulama became important landowners by privatizing many waqf (religious) lands.⁸⁹

It was also during this time that the ulama reasserted their traditional (pre-Safavid) role as “guardians, protectors, and defenders of Islam rather than as government advisers and administrators.”⁹⁰ Political activism worked not only in favor of the regime, but also in opposition to it. Internal weakness and the encroachment of Western imperialism placed the ulama in opposition to the Qajars and in alliance with the merchants. The merchants and ulama were both classes that had power and prestige. The merchants provided a good deal of revenue, and hence independence, to the ulama. They looked to the ulama for religious guidance in return.

The ulama were ambivalent regarding political opposition to the Qajars. The Akhbaris continued to argue that participation in politics would undermine their position as “guardians, protectors, and defenders of Islam” and corrupt the ulama. The Usulis insisted that faqihs (theologians) were the most qualified people to rule until the Mahdi returned. The Usuli position evolved into the dominant position as members of the ulama

⁸⁷ Limbert, 44–45.

⁸⁸ Nafisi, 170.

⁸⁹ Moghadam, 51.

⁹⁰ Goldschmidt, 83.

increasingly intervened in social, economic, and political matters.⁹¹

Recall from the previous chapter that the ulama helped to lead opposition to the Shah's foreign concessions in 1873 and again in the 1890s. They also became leaders in the new constitutional movement seeking to limit the Shah's arbitrary powers. The Ottoman Empire became the first Muslim entity in the world to promulgate a constitution in 1876.⁹² Many in Iran wanted to follow suit, resulting in the formation of semisecret societies supporting constitutionalism. Interestingly, the first such group sought legitimacy by claiming it was founded by Imam Husayn, 'Ali's martyred son. The mosques served as centers for organization. The ulama and their merchant allies took refuge in the Shah Abd al-Azim Shrine. They demanded the dismissal of undesirable individuals from their posts and the establishment of a Ministry of Justice. When government promises went unfulfilled riots broke out and the bazaars were shut down. Many of the ulama found asylum in Qom. On August 5, 1906, the Shah issued an imperial order establishing a National Consultative Assembly.⁹³

The constitution drafted by the Assembly created a popularly-elected Majlis with the power to legislate. However, all laws passed by the Majlis also had to win the approval of the Senate, half of whose members were appointed by the Shah. Furthermore, an ecclesiastical committee of five ulama was created to review all legislation. The committee had the power to veto all legislation incompatible with Islam.

⁹¹ Manoucher Parvin and Mostafa Vaziri, "Islamic Man and Society in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, ed. Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (London: Routledge, 1992), 118.

⁹² Mohsen Milani, "Shi'ism and the State in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, ed. Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (London: Routledge, 1992), 134.

The constitution affirmed the principle of popular sovereignty by stating that “the powers of the realm are derived from the people” (art. 26).⁹⁴ However, the ulama’s veto power clearly demonstrated that God’s sovereignty took precedence over popular sovereignty.

The constitution had the support of several important members of the ulama, such as Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Naini. Despite the concessions it made to Islam, many ulama opposed the constitution. Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri (a distant relative of Khomeini), initially a supporter of constitutionalism, denounced it saying the constitution was an “innovation and a downright aberration because in Islam no one is allowed to legislate” and “[i]t is not possible to bring this Islamic country under a constitutional regime except by abolishing Islam.”⁹⁵ The constitutional revolutionaries executed him in 1909.

Regardless of their orientation, however, most ulama were quickly excluded from the new government. Liberal nationalists, secular in orientation, took control from the start and celebrated the promulgation of the constitution. Yet, even the liberal nationalists did not have long to enjoy their new constitution. The Shah never formed the upper chamber. Due to the colonial encroachments of Russia and Great Britain, the Majlis was sporadically closed by the Shah and was disbanded completely by December 1915.

Reza Shah seized power from the Qajars in the 1920s. He saw himself as a great modernizer, much like his contemporary, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. He destroyed the traditional power base of the tribes in the 1920s. He also sought to limit the power of the

⁹³ Goldschmidt, 84-85.

ulama, but he proceeded much more cautiously with them. Some observers have speculated that by not aggressively dismantling the ulama and secularizing Iran, the Shah formed the basis for his own undoing. Certainly the leadership of the ulama overthrew his son, Mohammad Reza Shah. However, the conditions in Iran in the 1970s were ripe for revolution, so the lack of Islam would likely have affected the specific outcome, the institution of the Islamic Republic, without materially affecting the general outcome, the overthrow of the Shah. The real difference between Reza Shah and Ataturk was as follows:

Ataturk had led the forces of Turkish nationalism in an epic battle to rid Turkey of the imperialists and their agents. Reza Shah had begun his rise to power in an imperialist-supported if not inaugurated coup and did so in league with Sayyid Zia who was known as an agent of British imperialism.⁹⁶

It was the common perception of the Shah as a Western puppet and not the ulama that made for his undoing.

One reason for Reza Shah's more cautious approach with the ulama is their own increased quietism. After the constitutional movement backfired on the ulama, the Usulis were discredited. More leaders in the ulama called for political quietism, advocating ulama involvement in society but not in politics. Some among the ulama were co-opted by the regime. Therefore, Reza Shah did not need to take dramatic steps to curtail the ulama, as they were withdrawing from politics on their own. The steps he did take were

⁹⁴ Milani, 137.

⁹⁵ Goldschmidt, 85.

⁹⁶ Richard W. Cottam, "The Iranian Revolution," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, ed. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 68.

gradual in nature. For instance, he co-opted large landlords and used his influence to reduce ulama representation in the Majlis by favoring the landlords. The real conflict with the ulama began when the Shah began making inroads into their area of influence. This included government control over education, the court system, and waqf income. Reza Shah even went so far as to require the wearing of Western dress to further his modernization program. It was the government's invasion of the ulama's traditional area of control in the form of social programs that sparked the conflict.

In the chaos that ensued following World War II, tribal and religious leaders sought to re-assert their traditional authority. A small contingent of ulama even began to call for involvement in the government, founding the basis for the Islamic nationalist faction. This faction competed with the liberal and socialist factions in Iran. They all sought to reduce Iran's dependence on and vulnerability to foreign powers.

Initially the ulama supported Mossadeq's government. However, because the ulama were conservative members of Mossadeq's coalition, they came to oppose him when it became apparent that he was trying to oust the Shah completely and courting the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party.

The whole affair was yet another example of the ulama getting involved in politics, only to oppose the end result of their own efforts. This further strengthened the quietist elements within the ulama. It should come as no surprise that Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Boroujerdi, the marja-e taqlid (the model for emulation) from 1947 to 1961, was strongly opposed to religious involvement in politics. Of course, Mohammad Reza Shah's repressive policies after 1953 also encouraged quietism. The

Shah also rewarded quietism, repealing the prohibition against veiling in return for Boroujerdi's quietism.⁹⁷ Politically active mullahs, such as Ayatollah Kashani and Ayatollah Seyyed Ali-Akbar Borghei, were not welcome in Qom.⁹⁸ Boroujerdi worked to marginalize all politically active mullahs and restrain ulama activity to socially oriented concerns.

Ayatollah Boroujerdi died in 1961, leaving the post of marja-e taqlid vacant. The Shah publicly expressed his support for Ayatollah Hakim in Najaf, Iraq, for the position. Given the hostility toward the Shah within Iranian society and especially among the ulama by 1961, this endorsement eliminated any chances Hakim might have had to obtain the position.⁹⁹ The leading ayatollahs in Qom at the time were generally quietists politically and reactionaries socially. This made them unpopular with most modern, educated Iranians, especially among the younger generation. Their unpopularity was important because an ayatollah needs a large popular following to become the marja-e taqlid.

It was in this situation that an obscure cleric by the name of Ruhollah Khomeini, known then as Haj Aqa Ruhollah, rose to prominence. He seemed more in touch with the young people. He was known for his scholarship and his personal piety, both of which added to his credibility. The Shah tried to keep him from addressing large audiences, forcing him to give his public lectures at the isolated Khanum Mosque. Despite this,

⁹⁷ Abrahamian, 8.

⁹⁸ Mohammad Borghei, "Iran's Religious Establishment," in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, ed. Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (London: Routledge, 1992), 60.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 63.

Khomeini's lectures were the most well attended in Qom.¹⁰⁰

The Shah inadvertently played into the hands of the politically active mullahs during this critical time. On October 8, 1962, the Bill of the Election of the Municipal and Provisional Council was made public. The bill not only enfranchised women, but it eliminated the requirement that candidates be Muslim to run. This left the door open for non-Muslims to rule over Muslims, in contravention to the Sharia (Islamic law). The religious establishment in Iran immediately opposed the bill. They used the mosques to deliver political messages while the bazaars closed in support. Khomeini began to set the pace of the opposition. He was usually the first to criticize the Shah and particular policies, and he was the most strident in his criticism. Other, more prominent clerics found themselves having to increase the frequency and intensity of their criticism to maintain public standing. In response, Prime Minister Asadollah Alam announced the cancellation of the bill on November 26. The Council of Ministers adopted a bill on December 1 declaring the election bill null and void.¹⁰¹

On January 9, 1963, the Shah declared his Revolution of the Shah and People. He declared it mainly to destroy the power base of his traditional allies and consolidate state authority. He was also under pressure from the Kennedy administration to improve Iran's economy. The White Revolution threatened the ulama with the literacy corps, dedicated to secular education in rural areas. Women's suffrage also threatened the social order the clerics sought to maintain. Of course, the land redistribution program threatened the wealthy, landowning ulama as well.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 65.

The clergy mounted an escalating campaign of opposition. They mobilized popular opposition, especially among their traditional bazaar allies. The Tehran bazaar closed on January 21, with the Qom bazaar following suit two days later. There were riots and demonstrations in Qom and Tehran. The clergy publicly closed ranks by welcoming the politically active mullahs back into the Qom seminary.¹⁰²

The question among the leading clergy was no longer whether or not to be politically active, but how active to be. Two factions formed, one around the more traditional Ayatollah Shari'atmadari and the other around the (recently promoted) Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini quickly proved more adept at opposing the Shah and mobilizing popular support for his cause. He declared that “[t]he government wants to draft 18-year-old girls into the army and place them in the barracks,” or in other words, force Muslim girls into prostitution at bayonet point.¹⁰³ He secured public attention by declaring that the clergy would not celebrate New Year’s festivities. On the second day of the New Year the Shah’s forces disrupted a mourning gathering and beat the clergy at the Faizieh School. In response, public prayers were suspended for a week. In commemoration of the fortieth day of the Faizieh School incident, Khomeini accused the Shah of personal responsibility for the incident. The Shah banned the formation of mourning assemblies.¹⁰⁴

Both Shari'atmadari and Khomeini called for people to defy the ban during the upcoming month of Moharram, the month in which the martyrdom of Husayn was

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰² Ibid., 72-73.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 74.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 74-75.

commemorated. Religious gatherings became political rallies. Khomeini defied the many troops stationed in Qom and, with the protection of large crowds, gave a speech at the Faizieh School. He took a sharply critical tone of the Shah and incorporated anti-Zionist/Israel language in his anti-government speech. He was arrested in June of 1963, sparking civil unrest across the country on June 5.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, Khomeini had achieved a prominent position among the clergy. The Shah recognized this and, following continued criticism from Khomeini, had Khomeini exiled in 1964. Specifically, Khomeini was criticizing the Shah's foreign concessions, likening the diplomatic immunity granted all U.S. military personnel in Iran¹⁰⁶ to the humiliating capitulations of Iran's past.

Khomeini spent his exile in Turkey, Iraq, and France. He maintained his dominant position within the religious establishment through sermons, distributed in Iran on audiocassette, and through writing. The only challenge that faced Khomeini at this point was overcoming the competing (non-Islamic) opposition groups.

The four dominant ideologies in Iran during the twentieth century were all nationalist in orientation. Khomeini espoused the Islamic nationalist ideology. This was in competition with the liberal nationalists, the Persian nationalists, and the socialist nationalists. The Shah's ideology was based upon Persian nationalism, and therefore, since the Shah had proven himself a "foreign lackey" and not a "true nationalist," this ideology was discredited in the eyes of the Iranian populace. Since he dominated the Islamic nationalists, the only real competition Khomeini had to contend with came from the liberals and socialists.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 76.

After the 1953 coup, the Shah repressed his opposition by banning opposition parties, clubs, unions, syndicates, newspapers, and magazines.¹⁰⁷ These moves damaged the liberals and socialists far more than they did the Islamists, as the Islamists had mosques and madrasas to fall back on for communication and organization. The Shah was not too concerned with the Islamists after 1953, as they were returning to quietism.

During 1960 and 1961, the Shah allowed a brief period of political liberalization due to civil disturbances and pressure from the Kennedy administration. This liberalization allowed the National Front to coalesce again. As before, this was a predominantly liberal coalition with some socialist support. However, Ayatollah Boroujerdi's death in 1961 also allowed for the return of the clergy to political activism during this period. It was the suppression of the June 5, 1963 uprising, led by the clergy, that marked the end of this liberal period in Iran.

Despite his modernizing, secular approach, the Shah was not above using Islam to guide (or justify) some of his foreign policies. It was still important for the Shah to appear "Islamic" in the eyes of the average Iranian in order to maintain legitimacy. He played upon Iran's common Shia heritage with Shias in Iraq to gather intelligence and possibly destabilize the revolutionary regimes in power since 1958. The Shah also supported Shias in Lebanon against Nasserists. The Shah made some token contributions to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to prove his commitment to the common

¹⁰⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, Volume XVII, 519.

¹⁰⁷ Mehrdad Mashayekhi, "The Politics of Nationalism and Political Culture," in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, ed. Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (London: Routledge, 1992), 82.

Muslim cause against Israel. However, Iran's close, if low-profile relationship with Israel belied the Shah's true interests. Likewise, the Shah was every bit as eager to support Lebanese Christian opponents of Nasserism as he was to support his Shia coreligionists. Therefore, Islam was used to justify certain policies and to bolster the Shah's legitimacy. It seems not to have played a role in driving foreign policy though. This later worked against his credibility in the face of increasing clerical opposition and contributed to his downfall. Much like the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas II, the Shah's disregard for Islamic belief and practice led to a call for clerical rule.

In the wake of June 1963 and in the face of the continuing White Revolution, the Shah's opposition was divided. The socialists saw dependency upon the United States as the main problem facing Iran. Massoud Ahmadzadeh, a member of the secular Marxist Fedayan-i Khalq, stated that Western influence had "disrupted the natural development of the Eastern societies."¹⁰⁸ The socialists were critical of the liberals, who they felt were too pro-Western. The socialists remembered liberal intellectuals from the Constitutional period like Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh. The Islamist position on the West stood in stark contrast to the liberal position and was closer to the socialist stance. The following statement by Khomeini is illuminating in this regard:

Dear sisters and brothers, in whatever country you may live, defend your Islamic and national honor! Defend fearlessly and unhesitatingly the peoples and countries of Islam against their enemies—America, international Zionism, and all the superpowers of East and West. Loudly proclaim the crimes of the enemies of Islam. My Muslim brothers and sisters! You are aware that the superpowers of East and West are plundering all our material and other resources, and have placed us in a

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 96.

situation of political, economic, cultural, and military dependence. Come to your senses; rediscover your Islamic identity! Endure oppression no longer, and vigilantly expose the criminal plans of the international bandits, headed by America! Today the first *qibla* of the Muslims has fallen into the grasp of Israel, that cancerous growth in the Middle East. They are battering and slaughtering our dear Palestinian and Lebanese brothers with all their might. At the same time, Israel is casting dissension among the Muslims with all the diabolical means at its disposal. Every Muslim has a duty to prepare himself for battle against Israel.¹⁰⁹

Given Khomeini's strong rhetoric concerning the West, the socialists granted the Islamists their uncritical support until after the 1979 Revolution. The Islamist emphasis on violence, jihad, martyrdom, and retribution meshed well with traditional Marxist teaching.¹¹⁰ The Islamic faction also promised justice for the *mostaz'afin* (dispossessed or oppressed), a theme popular with socialists.¹¹¹

Not all socialists were secular, though. The Mujahideen-i Khalq was established in 1966 as an Islamic Marxist group. They began an armed revolt against the Shah by 1971.¹¹² They asked for Khomeini's support in 1972 and again in 1974, but Khomeini remained aloof to preserve his position at the top of the Islamist movement. Unity was maintained within the Islamist movement, as neither faction denounced the other until after the revolution.¹¹³

The socialists placed their emphasis on underground, guerrilla-style revolutionary movements such as the Fedayan-i Khalq and the Mujahideen-i Khalq. This, combined

¹⁰⁹ Khomeini, 276.

¹¹⁰ Mashayekhi, 104.

¹¹¹ Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad, introduction to *Iran After the Revolution: Crisis of an Islamic State*, ed. Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 14.

¹¹² Yapp, 340.

¹¹³ Ali Rahnema and Farhad Nomani, "Competing Shi'i Subsystems in Contemporary Iran," in *Iran After the Revolution: Crisis of an Islamic State*, ed. Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad (London:

with government repression, prevented them from obtaining a large mass base after 1963. Khomeini, on the other hand, had demonstrated his ability to obtain mass support during the 1962-63 time frame. During the revolution, Khomeini relied on komitehs (neighborhood committees), mosques, and Friday prayer leaders to keep him in touch with the “common man.” The institutions he created in the early phases of the revolution allowed him to maintain social control as well. He appointed himself as the velayat-e faqih (rule of the just jurist), and he used this to control the Shuray-e Negahban (Council of Guardians), revolutionary courts, revolutionary guards, and the Bonyad-e Mostaz’afeen (Foundation for the Dispossessed). The pasdaran and basijis, which were popular militias, helped him both to keep in touch with the common Iranian and to maintain social control.¹¹⁴

Although their pro-Western bent discredited the liberals in the eyes of many Iranians in the 1960s and 70s, they remained a powerful force until the revolution. Khomeini needed to win their support at least until the revolution was nearly complete. To allay their fears upon the eve of the revolution, Khomeini issued statements that the mullahs would not interfere in government affairs in Iran.¹¹⁵ Khomeini promised to respect both democracy and tolerance. He appointed Mehdi Bazargan as interim prime minister until the constitution took effect. When Khomeini’s actions in Tehran in 1979 betrayed his earlier promises, Khomeini diverted attention by supporting the US Embassy

I.B. Tauris, 1995), 87.

¹¹⁴ Manouchehr Dorraj, “Populism and Corporatism in Post-Revolutionary Iranian Political Culture,” in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*, ed. Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (London: Routledge, 1992), 219.

¹¹⁵ Bani-Sadr, 1.

hostage crisis in November 1979.¹¹⁶ Regardless of the reasons for the seizure of the embassy, Khomeini capitalized on it and later on the Iraqi invasion to forcefully eliminate all of his non-Islamic and even his Islamic competitors through armed confrontation, assassination, execution, imprisonment, and exile.

Therefore, by co-opting and then marginalizing his competition, Khomeini was able to lead the revolution when it finally succeeded in ousting the Shah in January 1979. Because he had figurehead status for the revolution, he was able to create institutions that favored the Islamist faction. The Islamists were the best organized and the most capable of mobilizing mass support. In the face of crisis after crisis, Khomeini was then able to eliminate non-Islamists from Iran. By the end of 1982 the revolution was over and Khomeini had established his undisputed authority over all of Iran.¹¹⁷

The Islamists led the revolution in the name of the *mostaz'afeen*. This idea is written in the Islam Republic's Constitution, "Precisely in this lies the realization of the holy government upon earth (in accordance with the Koranic verse 'And we wish to show favor to those who have been oppressed upon the earth, and to make them leaders and the inheritors.' [28:5])."¹¹⁸ Despite this, the revolution was in reality conservative compared to other popular revolutions. Even the "radical" mullahs were generally conservative elements in Iranian society, along with their very conservative core supporters, the bazaaris. As previously noted, many among the ulama were large landowners. This was reflected in that only about 5 percent of arable land permanently changed hands as a

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁷ Yapp, 349.

¹¹⁸ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, "The Form of Government in Islam"; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir001.html>; Internet.

result of the Islamic Revolution.¹¹⁹ Although the Islamic government dabbled in social-justice economic policies, they generally supported the rights and interests of the traditional middle class and even continued the Shah's efforts to incorporate Iran into the world economy. This factor would become decisive as the unity of the Islamist faction dissolved.

Once firmly in power, the Islamists began using Islam to drive their foreign policy. Islam was also used to decide what was acceptable and unacceptable behavior, both internally and in foreign affairs. Khomeini drew up several regulations "Enjoining the Good and Forbidding the Evil" to bind the behavior of the ulama and to a lesser extend, the umma.¹²⁰ Two of his other legal rulings concerning foreign policy are clearly of interest in this regard:

(2832) If the establishment of relations, whether political or commercial, between one of the Muslim states and foreigners is contrary to the interest of Islam and the Muslims, such relations are not permissible and if a Muslim government moves to establish such relations, it is the duty of the other Muslim governments to compel it, by any means possible, to sever relations.

(2834) [The establishment of] commercial and political relations with states like Israel that are the tools of the tyrannical superpowers is not permissible and it is the duty of the Muslims to oppose such relations in any way possible. Merchants who establish commercial relations with Israel and its agents are traitors to Islam and the Muslims, and they are aiding in the destruction of the ordinances of Islam. It is the duty of the Muslims to discontinue all dealings with those traitors, whether they are governments or merchants, and to compel them to repent and renounce their relations with such states.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Moghadam, 61.

¹²⁰ Khomeini, 437-439.

¹²¹ Ibid., 440-441.

It should not be inferred that the Islamist faction was a monolithic one. Contrary to popular Western characterization, the Islamists were divided into four separate factions, all of which Khomeini co-opted at one time or another. The wide variety of beliefs in the Islamist camp helped to garner broad support for the Islamists from the general population. Khomeini found it useful to emphasize one or another faction depending on the circumstances of the moment. These factions can be identified with their leaders: Ayatollah Mortaza Motahhari, Ali Shariati, Mojtaba Navab-Safavi, and Mehdi Bazargan.

Motahhari formulated his school of thought, or “Shi’i subsystem” in the words of Ali Rahnema and Farhad Nomani,¹²² in response to the socialist movement in Iran. He declared that Islam was superior to Communism, but he envisioned an Islam that was free from superstition, parochialism, and conservatism. He wanted to free Islam from the “deviations” of those who would merge Marxism with Islam. He was especially concerned with winning the hearts and minds of the youth, many of which were turning to Marxism. He believed that pious believers came from all social classes and not just the mostaz’afeen. Motahhari believed that the will of God took precedence over the will of the people. Motahhari taught that freedom was encouraged within an Islamic framework. Only members of the clergy were qualified for leadership (not surprising since Motahhari was an ayatollah). Economically, Motahhari was among the conservatives as he emphasized equality of opportunity over equality of results.¹²³

Motahhari’s subsystem was arguably the most influential of the four in the

¹²² Rahnema and Nomani, 67.

establishing the “rules of the game,” in this case, the drafting of the Constitution.

Motahhari’s embrace of all social classes is enshrined in the Constitution, “In the view of Islam, government does not derive from the interests of a class, nor does it serve the domination of an individual or a group.”¹²⁴ The first four “foundational principles” in Article 2 of the Constitution illustrate his principle of God’s sovereignty over popular sovereignty:

The Islamic Republic is a system based on belief in:

- 1) the One God (as stated in the phrase “There is no god except Allah”), His exclusive sovereignty and right to legislate, and the necessity of submission to His commands;
- 2) Divine revelation and its fundamental role in setting forth laws;
- 3) the return to God in the Hereafter, and the constructive role of this belief in the course of man’s ascent towards God;
- 4) the justice of God in creation and legislation;¹²⁵

The principle requiring the leadership of clergy was stated, “...the exercise of meticulous and earnest supervision by just, pious, and committed scholars of Islam is an absolute necessity.”¹²⁶ Finally, Motahhari’s support of equality of opportunity is explicitly laid out, “...it is the duty of the Islamic government to furnish all citizens with equal opportunity and appropriate opportunities, to provide them with work, and to satisfy their essential needs...”¹²⁷

Ali Shariati also formulated his subsystem in response to socialism. In contrast to Motahhari, however, he responded to socialism by accommodating it. He used Islamic

¹²³ Ibid., 70-72.

¹²⁴ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, “The Form of Government in Islam.”

¹²⁵ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 2; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir002.html>; Internet.

¹²⁶ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, “The Form of Government in Islam.”

language to convey Western ideas, especially Marxist-Leninist ideas, to university students. He stated that Imam ‘Ali represented social justice, liberation, and humanism. He believed in the empowerment of the mostaz’afeen over the mostakberin (oppressors). He supported the benevolent dictatorship of the just Imam. He viewed Islam in terms of a struggle against capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism. He characterized competing Islamic viewpoints as “polytheistic Islam,” used to confuse the masses and keep them submissive to repression. The Safavids were the first to propagate polytheistic Islam for these very purposes, and the oppressors of the twentieth century continued to do so.¹²⁸

Ali Shariati helped to win intellectual support for the Islamist cause, as he appealed to the new middle class in Iran under the Shah by preaching an “Islam without clerics” that would have given the middle class a political voice.¹²⁹ The group that most closely adhered to his principles was the Mujahideen-i Khalq. The Mujahideen bitterly opposed the revolutionary regime. On June 28, 1981, 120 members of the dominant party, the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), were killed when the Mujahideen bombed the party headquarters. Another attack carried out on August 30 against the prime minister’s office resulted in the death of President Muhammad ‘Ali Raja’i and Prime Minister Muhammad Javad Bahunar.¹³⁰

Navab-Safavi’s subsystem advocated the imposition of Sharia law. Although he felt the institution of monarchy was compatible with Islam, he founded the Feda’iyan-e

¹²⁷ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, “The Economy is a Means, Not an End.”

¹²⁸ Rahnema and Nomani, 74-79.

¹²⁹ Ahmad Ashraf, “From the White Revolution to the Islamic Revolution,” in *Iran After the Revolution: Crisis of an Islamic State*, ed. Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 36.

¹³⁰ Yapp, 349.

Eslam (Devotees of Islam) to rectify the apostasy that occurred under Reza Shah. This “rectification” took the form of numerous assassinations of politicians and intellectuals.¹³¹ He was very anti-foreign and felt martyrdom was necessary to further the cause of Islam. It was important for this subsystem to strictly enforce Islam’s social morality laws, such as veiling, segregation of the sexes, and the prohibition of alcohol, prostitution, and gambling. He felt leisure time should be reduced to prevent individuals from asking questions and thus posing problems. It is significant to note that he stressed it was of great importance to combat all foreign influences that are corrupting. Because of this he taught interaction between Muslims and non-Muslim foreigners should be minimized, while a military alliance ought to exist between all Muslim states.¹³²

Although the Shah executed Navab-Safavi in 1956, his followers continued to be influential in Iran. They founded Hey’at-ha-ye Mo’talefeh-ye Eslami (Islamic Coalition of Mourning Groups or ICMG) with Khomeini’s recommendation in 1963. The Shah suppressed the group in 1965, but it became active again after the revolution and supported the Militant Clergy of Tehran.¹³³

Bazargan’s subsystem preached tolerance as the cornerstone of Islam. He felt the practice of Islam was a private matter. He endorsed rule by the people and opposed the velayat-e faqih. Economically, he supported capitalism with a safety net for the poor. He also supported a government role in consumer protection and in providing public

¹³¹ Nikki R. Keddie and Juan R. I. Cole, introduction to *Shi’ism and Social Protest*, ed. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 10.

¹³² Rahnema and Nomani, 80-81.

¹³³ Ibid., 82.

services.¹³⁴

This subsystem had a minor effect on the rules of the game established in 1979. It appealed to the liberal nationalists, but clearly the other Islamists overcame Bazargan's opposition to the velayat-e faqih. However, popular sovereignty also made its way into the Constitution, "...the participation of the entire people in determining their political, economic, social, and cultural destiny."¹³⁵ Bazargan founded the Freedom Movement of Iran (FMI) which continued to legally function even after the fall of Bazargan from the government in November 1979.

These competing factions became increasingly important as the threat to the revolution continued to diminish. After 1982, the tide of the war against Iraq had decisively turned in Iran's favor. Khomeini dissolved the still-dominant IRP on June 1, 1987. The factions now have new expression in the Association of Militant Clergy of Tehran and the Assembly of Militant Clerics of Tehran. The former embodied the followers of Motahhari and Navab-Safavi, while the latter attracted Shariati's followers. Khomeini endorsed both before his death in the Covenant of Brotherhood. He stated the door to interpretation (ijtihad) was open, so disagreement within the Islamic context was legitimate.¹³⁶

In foreign policy terms, the Militant Clerics tend to be slightly more "moderate" than the Militant Clergy, as they backed Khatami for president. *Salam*, the newspaper controlled by the most moderate elements of the Militant Clerics, praised Khatami's

¹³⁴ Ibid., 83-85.

¹³⁵ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 3; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir002.html>; Internet.

¹³⁶ Rahnema and Nomani, 89.

interview with Amanpour and said “in two articles on the takeover of the U.S. embassy, [sic] said Khatami’s response to the CNN was good and favorable.”¹³⁷

The Militant Clergy supported Nateq Nouri for president. He continues to support the idea of “exporting revolution” as he stated during a trip to Syria that “Iran and Syria would continue to throw their support behind Islamic resistance movements in the face of Zionist threats.”¹³⁸ *Jomhuri Islami*, a paper for the Militant Clergy, criticized Khatami’s apologetic defense of the embassy takeover, calling “on supporters of the President to press him to ‘correct his errors.’”¹³⁹ *Resalat*, another right-wing paper, criticized Khatami and accused him of being “unkind” to the Militant Clergy during his CNN interview.¹⁴⁰

Rafsanjani was allied to both the Militant Clergy and the Servants of Construction, known for being the “pragmatic” faction in Iran.¹⁴¹ His pragmatism was displayed when he said the best way to export revolution was by inspiring other states through the example of Iran’s internal economic progress, as opposed to direct subversion.¹⁴² The late Bazargan’s FMI follows an open, “non-exporting” brand of personal Islam. It should not be thought that any of these factions are monolithic entities, however. There is presently talk of forming political parties, but the leading factions

¹³⁷ “Press Review,” *Iran News*, 13 Jan 98; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet..

¹³⁸ “Nateq-Nouri Declares Support for Islamic Resistance Movements,” *Iran News*, 5 February 1998; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ “Combatant Clergy and Clerics,” *The Economist*, 18 January 1997, p. S6; available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

¹⁴² Abrahamian, 141.

have declined to do so.¹⁴³ This allows some variation in the politics of individual members and also allows for very fluid coalitions between the major and other more minor factions.

Islam is the driving force for many policies in Iran, including the celebration of Qods Day (al-Qods is Arabic for Jerusalem) on the last Friday of every Ramadan. Those who celebrate Qods Day condemn the Israeli government and call for the “liberation” of Jerusalem. Qods Day has been celebrated in Iran since Khomeini instituted it in 1979.

Iran News cited Khatami’s “moderate” Foreign Minister’s explanation of the connection between this policy and Islam:

[T]he Foreign Ministry has invited all Muslims and Arab nations to—through unity and Islamic solidarity—do their utmost for liberation of the first Muslim Qibla, all the occupied territories and restoration of the Palestinian rights. The statement expresses dismay at ‘the unreasonable and broad-based political, international, economic, military and propaganda support by the U.S. for the state terrorism and expansionist policies practiced by the Qods occupying regime.’¹⁴⁴

Millions in Iran, as well as many Muslims in other countries, including Western countries, observe Qods Day. The Friday prayer leader of Bucharest, Osman Aziz, said, “Qods belongs to the Palestinians and that all Muslims around the world should make a united effort in order to liberate that part of the Islamic territory.”¹⁴⁵

No one is expecting all Muslims around the world to rise up and attack Israel in

¹⁴³ “Militant Clergy Association Reportedly not to Form Political Party,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part 4, The Middle East, 10 February 1998, ME/D3147/MED; available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

¹⁴⁴ “FM Calls for Muslim Unity to End Israeli Occupation,” *Iran News*, 24 Jan 1998; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

¹⁴⁵ “Romanian Muslims Observe World Qods Day,” *Tehran Times*, 26 Jan 1998; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

an attempt to “liberate” Jerusalem as a result of Qods Day celebrations. However, it is significant in two regards. The first is that many Muslims, within and outside of Iran, observe the day and use it in a political fashion to oppose or pressure the peace process. The second is that Iran’s opposition to the peace process was one of the three reasons for ILSA. If the United States expects Iran to stop opposing the peace process, it needs to find a solution that is acceptable in an Islamic manner to such controversial issues. One reason Iran opposes the Middle East peace process is because it views the United States as dominating the negotiations and not being an objective or neutral arbiter. Both houses of Congress passed bills recognizing Jerusalem as the indivisible and eternal capital of Israel.¹⁴⁶ This came before negotiations concerning the final status of Jerusalem even began, further tainting the U.S. reputation and giving credence to Iranian fears.

The OIC also provides Iran with an Islamic foreign policy outlet. Al-Azhar, the oldest existing Islamic learning institution, based in Cairo, stated “the 8th Islamic summit of Tehran ‘made the voice of the Islamic community heard all over the world.’”¹⁴⁷ Resolutions were passed during the summit that rejected Israeli policy concerning Jerusalem, supported countries confronting Israel, and supported the Palestinians. Resolutions were also passed calling for the creation of an Islamic common market, support for Libya, peace in Afghanistan, and “respect for the territorial integrity of Iraq.”¹⁴⁸ There was also a resolution that expressed concern over the “U.S.

¹⁴⁶ see S.R. 113, 102nd Congress, 1992; S.R. 1322, 104th Congress, 1995; H.R. 281, 103rd Congress, 1994; and H.R. 36, 104th Congress, 1995 for recent examples.

¹⁴⁷ “Al-Azhar: Tehran Islamic Summit Makes Islamic Voice Heard in World.”

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

extraterritorial laws against other countries,” referencing ILSA.¹⁴⁹

At the opening of the summit, Khatami called for the building of a “new civilization” based on the Quran. This civilization would be one based on Islamic solidarity among the member nations and would seek to “judiciously [adopt] some of the constructive aspects of the Western civil society” and to “derive constructive benefits from the achievements of Western civilization in the area of science, technology and social norms to move forward into future [sic], an inevitable means to a successful entry into the future.”¹⁵⁰ Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* illustrates some of the potential implications for foreign policy such a vision entails.¹⁵¹

Islam does not only drive grandiose statements and broad visions in Iranian foreign policy, it drives actions that can be traced directly to Islam. Relations between Syria and Iran before the revolution were cool at best. Syria was a secular, Baathist state, like Iran’s age-old rival Iraq. Also like Iraq, Syria was a Soviet client. Despite this closeness, and amid talks of uniting Syria with Iraq, Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad, an Alawite and therefore a Shia, openly praised the Iranian Revolution and recognized the new regime immediately.¹⁵² During the war with Iraq, Syria even assisted in the arming of Iran, despite an international arms embargo.¹⁵³ Assad went so far as to take steps that cost Syria economically by closing the Syrian border to Iraq and shutting off the pipeline

¹⁴⁹ “OIC Takes a Stand Against U.S. D’Amato Law,” *Iran News*, 11 Dec 1997; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

¹⁵⁰ “Khatami: Islamic Civil Society as a Means of Attaining Unity, Justice,” *Tehran Times*, 11 Dec 1997; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

¹⁵¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1996).

¹⁵² Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 27.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 43.

that carried Iraqi oil to the Syrian and Lebanese coast. Some might argue that Syria's friendship with Iran was the result of its hostility to Iraq. However, the only factor that changed between the close relationship of Syria and Iraq in the late 1970s and Syria and Iran's alliance during the war was the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Therefore, Islam drew these two unlikely partners together at a time when the mullahs in Iran were alienating most other states in the region.

Iran has supported leading Shia opposition groups within Iraq on the basis of religious affiliation. The Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI) and its "suicide squads," the Mujahidun, were founded in Tehran with Iranian moral and financial support. SAIRI openly adheres to Iranian foreign policies and favors Khomeini's system of velayat-e faqih.¹⁵⁴ Iran also supported Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Call Party, or Da'wa), although it tends to be more independent than SAIRI and it has been critical of Iran in the past. Nonetheless, Da'wa has been allowed to function openly in Iran and even received some Iranian support.¹⁵⁵

Again it might be argued that Iran's policy was pragmatic, driven by a desire to weaken a powerful neighbor and regional rival, rather than religious in nature. However, the clerical leadership in Iran suspended aid to Kurdish insurgents in northern Iraq after the revolution because the Kurds were Sunni. By 1985, however, they resumed the Shah's policy of supporting Iraqi Kurds, probably due to pragmatic concerns. In return, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) began providing refuge to Da'wa and SAIRI

¹⁵⁴ Hanna Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq: Al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah and al-Mujahidin," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, ed. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 180.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 197.

members.¹⁵⁶

Iran continued to support the Shias in Lebanon, although support for Lebanese Christians had dried up. Even during the height of the Iran-Iraq War, hundreds of Iranian volunteers from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) went to Lebanon to assist the Shia Amal and Hezbollah groups against Israel and the other Lebanese factions. The Majlis approved legislation legitimizing the action on June 8, 1981, when Iraqi forces were still occupying Iranian soil.¹⁵⁷

Although Iran did not initially take a strong interest in the events occurring in Afghanistan, except insofar as it threatened Iranian security, Iran eventually adopted a policy supporting Afghanistan's Hazara Shia minority. At first this support was directed against the atheist Soviets, then after the Soviet withdrawal against the Sunni Pushtun majority. Iran still does not support the Sunni-led Taliban, which controls most of Afghanistan. Rather, it recognizes the "government" led by members of the northern coalition who are loosely allied with the Hazaras against the Taliban.

Iran has supported Islamist movements in many Islamic countries, including Sudan and Algeria. This policy has been pursued regardless of its pragmatism or lack thereof. Iran also warmed up considerably to Turkey's Islamist-led government before it was pressured to step down by the Turkish military. Iran has made appeals to Saudi Arabia's and Kuwait's Shia minority, as well as Bahrain's Shia majority, despite the fact that this has alienated all three Sunni governments. Iran supported the Bosnian Muslims against the Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats, and continues to seek close relations

¹⁵⁶ Hiro, 150.

with Bosnia's government.¹⁵⁸

There is talk in Iran that Islam may play a less direct role in the government in the future, more like the Qajar model than the Safavid one. Iran's continuing economic woes has led some, including members of the clergy such as Ayatollah Hossein Montazeri, to call for reconsidering the role of clergy within the government. The close association of the clergy with government mismanagement may detract from the legitimacy of the mullah's spiritual role in Iranian society as "guardians, protectors, and defenders of Islam." Montazeri stated that the purpose of the velayat-e faqih was to "supervise the affairs of society" but not to "interfere in these affairs" or to "set up a separate apparatus." This criticism included the Council of Guardians, warning them not "to impose their own personal tastes" and thereby "violate the people's rights." He also criticized religious control of television and radio.¹⁵⁹ Given that Montazeri was once designated as Khomeini's successor for the position of Leader, his recent statements are particularly noteworthy.

The current situation might appear to be as auspicious as ever to question the fusion of religion and state in Iran. Montazeri was also the only grand ayatollah to ever sanction Khomeini's concept of velayat-e faqih. The current Supreme Leader, Khamenei, did not even possess the qualifications for the rank of ayatollah (let alone grand ayatollah) when he was selected for the post based on purely domestic political

¹⁵⁷ Segev, 125-126.

¹⁵⁸ "Nasirovic: Bosnians Will Never Forget Iran's Assistance," IRNA, 18 March 1998; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

¹⁵⁹ "Paper Publishes Part of Montazeri's Speech Criticizing the Leadership," BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 4, The Middle East, 4 December 1997, ME/D3093/MED; available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

wrangling. He was promoted on the basis of his political qualifications, an apparent retreat from Khomeini's insistence that the most qualified religious authority was therefore the most qualified political authority.¹⁶⁰

Some, like Professor Abdol-Karim Soroush, have gone so far as to call for the elimination of the velayat-e faqih.¹⁶¹ In October 1995, Soroush was attacked by zealots and prevented from delivering a lecture at Tehran University. Subsequently, 7,000 students took part in a pro-Soroush demonstration, the largest anti-regime demonstration since the revolution.¹⁶² However, the centers of political power still firmly support the existing structure. A recent statement by the presiding board of the Assembly of Experts is indicative, "...any act aiming to undermine the lofty position of Velayat-e Faqih (governance of supreme jurisprudence) is a great sin and is against the interests of Islam and the Islamic Republic."¹⁶³ It should be noted that Montazeri remains under house arrest and might face treason charges for his comments.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, no dramatic changes should be expected in the near future.

Clearly, Islam has a pervasive and significant impact on foreign policy decisions made in Iran, even to the point of adopting non-pragmatic foreign policies. Additionally, Islam is frequently used to justify policies pursued or avoided. It should not be thought that there is one "Islam" in Iran that produces one answer to all foreign policy questions,

¹⁶⁰ Ahmad Ghoreishi, *Prospects for a Regime Change in Iran* (unpublished), 10.

¹⁶¹ Robert Fisk, "Iran's Leader Urged to Stand Up for Human Rights," *The Independent*, 8 December 1997, 6; available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

¹⁶² Ghoreishi, 8.

¹⁶³ "Experts Assembly Condemns Anti-Velayat-e Faqih Statements," *Iran News*, 24 November 1997, National Section; available from <http://msanews.mynet.net/Launchpad/index.html>; Internet.

¹⁶⁴ Douglas Jehl, "Cleric Who Challenged Leadership Now Faces Possible Treason Charge," *New York Times*, 16 Dec 1997, International Section, 1; available from <http://www.nytimes.com/yr/mo/day/news/world/iran-cleric.html>; Internet.

though. The four major factions within Iran indicate that it is important to know who is in the position to make foreign policy and which faction they belong to. The question of which position(s) in the government are responsible for foreign policy and what biases are associated with such positions will be addressed in the following chapter.

IV. WHO DECIDES?

Many have speculated what direction Iran will move now that a "moderate" like Khatami has been elected president. Many within Iran thought he would allow the young greater liberty, more power to women, more jobs for the poor, and better export opportunities for Iranian businessmen. Some outside of Iran speculated he would open more to the West. The factors of foreign domination and Islam determine how much leeway or motivation he has to do these things, but what power he does and does not wield is also a significant factor. One Iranian said, "This is the first time that we have come to learn how powerless a president can be."¹⁶⁵

It has been shown that foreign policy decisions in Iran are constrained or driven primarily through the lens of the history of foreign domination and the history and institution of Islam. This information alone, however, is not sufficient to understand or predict foreign policy decisions. The last factor that must be weighed is who is responsible for foreign policy decisions, and what their position means in terms of their agenda.

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to define a few terms. Terms, such as "conservative" and "radical" may have commonly accepted meanings in a Western context, but these same terms may cause confusion when applied to Iran. There are three basic groups in the Iranian political spectrum: conservative, pragmatic, and moderate.

¹⁶⁵ Douglas Jehl, "Iranians Still Warily Await Reforms They Voted for," *New York Times*, 11 October 1997, International Section; available from <http://www.nytimes.com/yr/mo/day/news/world/iran-voters.html>; Internet.

Conservatives tend toward policies that respect private property and favor less democratic forms of government (e.g., oligarchy). This group can be further subdivided into “traditional” and what the Western press normally labels “radical” when referring to Iran. The traditionalists stem from the most traditional Shia branch, the Akhbaris. They favor political quietism and therefore oppose velayat-e faqih and exporting revolution. They act as advocates for traditional classes, especially the traditional middle class, the bazaaris. In terms of the Shia subsystems discussed in Chapter 3, Navab-Safavi’s is probably the closest to the traditional position, although even it has been used to further political, as opposed to quietist, ends. The radicals are ardent supporters of Khomeinism, including the export of revolution through terrorism, subversion, or even open warfare. They are close to both Motahhari’s and Navab-Safavi’s subsystems.

Both groups are conservative, as both tend to come from traditional classes (mullahs, bazaaris, etc.) and tend to own property. Both also tend to act on ideology even when it is not practical. The radicals are a clear example of this, as the radical policies pursued by the revolutionary regime early in its life quickly made Iran a pariah state, a status some within Iran are still attempting to overcome. These policies were pursued even though they hampered the war effort against Iraq and caused long-lasting economic damage. Khomeini frequently expressed open contempt for Iran’s intelligentsia, especially economists, during the early phase of the revolution. The early years of the revolution were certainly the most radical, and the radical’s self-destructive dogmatic pursuit of ideology can be seen from its impact on the Iranian economy. Between 1977 and 1980, before the war with Iraq and the world oil glut, value-added in industry

declined 20 percent. Value-added in trade declined by 21 percent during this period, and financial services declined by 14 percent. Gross domestic fixed-capital formation (investment) was only 57 percent of the 1977 level, while investment in machinery had dropped to 36 percent of its 1977 level.¹⁶⁶

The traditionalists are no more pragmatic, however. They refuse to work within the established system to create a more favorable order, which may not be surprising since they are after all quietists. However, they have entered the political scene (on "religious" grounds, of course) and openly oppose the current regime despite some very real personal consequences. Grand Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari was publicly demoted by Khomeini because of his opposition. Ayatollahs Haj Hassan Ghommi, Zanjani, and Shirazi are under virtual house arrest because of their implacable opposition.¹⁶⁷

The pragmatists are close to the radicals in their ideology and composition. The main difference between the two groups is that the pragmatists are not driven as rigidly by their ideology as the radicals are (hence "pragmatists"). Rafsanjani and the Servants of Construction are perhaps the most well known pragmatists in Iran. They seek to uphold Khomeini's system in Iran and to support Islamist, especially Shia Islamist movements abroad. However, they are more cautious about supporting terrorism, subversion, and other extreme measures that would alienate Western countries, especially France, Germany, and Great Britain. Unlike the radicals, they have a real interest in economics and in modern development for Iran. They are close to Motahhari's

¹⁶⁶ Sohrab Behdad, "The Post-Revolutionary Economic Crisis," in *Iran After the Revolution:*

subsystem but not generally as enamored with Navab-Safavi's subsystem.

The moderates include a very broad range on the political spectrum. Except during the Mossadeq period, 1951-1953, they have generally been in opposition to the government or junior partners at best. It is only because the moderates have never been in clear command of the country that they can be regarded as one faction, because their internal differences would certainly split them if in power. The moderates include the liberals and the socialists. Members of the intelligentsia, workers, students, and the modern middle class usually belong to the moderate faction, making it diverse in composition as well as ideology. The most moderates have in common with each other is openness to Western ideas (Communism, democracy, free markets, etc.), although this does not necessarily mean they are pro-Western (e.g., Bani-Sadr). The moderate block includes the followers of Ali Shariati and Bazargan. There still exists in Iran a radical left (in the Western sense), although most of its members have evolved into a more constitutional left, and therefore fall into the moderate camp. The few remaining radical leftists have lost ideological and popular support and are a marginal group, at best.

Given the moderates' confidence in their own popular base and their limited representation in government, they tend to be pro-democracy. For the liberals this is also a matter of ideology; however, for the socialists this may be more practical than ideological. The moderates' confidence in their popularity was perhaps validated in the overwhelming election of Khatami in May 1997. For the time being, it appears that the moderates favor an open foreign policy of mending relations with Iran's neighbors,

Crisis of an Islamic State, ed. Saeed Rahnema and Sohrab Behdad (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 103.

"pursuing détente in Iran's foreign policy" and encouraging foreign investment, even from the West.¹⁶⁸ They certainly oppose exporting Iran's Islamic revolution, as they are not satisfied with the revolution's results in Iran. This is no guarantee that they would not support their own revolutionary foreign policy if they were firmly in power, especially the more extreme Marxist elements. However, given the decline of Marxist ideology globally, it is questionable whether that is even a concern today. The liberals could be expected to act according to their liberal ideology (democratic peace?).

Using these definitions, the political structure in Iran can be analyzed to determine which positions in the government will tend toward which attitudes. The highest authority in Iran, including in foreign policy matters, is the Supreme Leader. He is selected by the Assembly of Experts based on the following qualifications: religious scholarship, justice, piety, "right political and social perspicacity," prudence, courage, administrative facilities, and an "adequate capability for leadership."¹⁶⁹ Obviously, these qualifications are highly subjective and therefore the type of person likely to be selected will depend largely on the character of the Assembly of Experts.

The members of the Assembly of Experts are popularly elected, although only clerics may be elected. It was not always this way—the first Assembly of Experts elected during 1979 to draft Iran's current constitution was composed of clerics and laymen. However, this assembly was disbanded following the referendum approving the constitution on December 2, 1979. The second assembly was elected in December 1982,

¹⁶⁷ Ghoreishi, 10.

¹⁶⁸ "President Meets Experts Assembly," IRNA, 5 February 1998, available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

¹⁶⁹ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 109; available from <http://www.uni->

83 members elected for eight-year terms. Generally, only very senior clerics, both in rank and in age, were elected, as evidenced by the number of clerics who passed away and had to be replaced in April 1988 by-elections.¹⁷⁰ Because of this and because they were elected during the height of the Iran-Iraq War, these clerics tended to be radical. This trend has continued, and most Assembly of Experts members strongly support the velayat-e faqih, enforcement of Islamic social codes, and cautious dealings with the West. The reference from an AOE statement made in November 1997 cited in the previous chapter is indicative of the body's conservative nature. Therefore, radical clerics are more likely to be selected by the assembly than moderates are.

It should not be forgotten that the Supreme Leader will be biased toward a more radical approach regardless of his personal agenda once in office. He is, after all, the ruling jurist. Therefore, he has a strong interest in maintaining the principle of velayat-e faqih as a means of preserving or expanding his own power. All democratic institutions or liberal tendencies are a threat to his position and authority.

It is vital to understand the Leader's position and the institutional biases associated with it. As noted above, he is the highest authority in Iran. He decides the overall policies, including foreign policies, of Iran in consultation with the National Exigency (also translated Expediency) Council. He signs the decree recognizing the election of the President. He may dismiss the President if he is found guilty of violating his constitutional duties by the Supreme Court or after a vote by the Majlis indicating his incompetence. He may pardon or reduce the sentence of convicts. He may issue decrees

wuerzburg.de/law/ir009.html; Internet.

for national referenda. He is the supreme commander for the armed forces, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and the chief of the joint staff. He may declare war, peace, and mobilization of the armed forces. He is the supreme judicial authority in the state. He is the head of the radio and television network in Iran.¹⁷¹

It may seem that there are some checks upon the power of the Leader, such as the requirement to consult with the Exigency Council. However, according to the constitution, this council only meets upon the order of the Leader. Additionally, the Leader selects all of its members. Ayatollah Khomeini founded the council on February 6, 1988. On March 18, 1997, Khamenei appointed 27 new members to the council for five-year terms, including its chairman, then-President Rafsanjani. In the decree that established the new membership of the council, Khamenei stated that it was to be composed of the heads of the three branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial), the jurisconsults of the Council of Guardians, and important government ministers. However, Khatami was elected President in May and therefore became the head of the executive branch. He still has not been appointed to the Exigency Council, but the more conservative Rafsanjani continues to perform as the chairman of the council.¹⁷²

The Supreme Court may initially appear to be a check upon the powers of the Leader. After all, Article 107 of the Constitution states "The Leader is equal with the rest

¹⁷⁰ "Assembly of Experts," *State Structure*; available from <http://www.netiran.com/statestructure.html>; Internet.

¹⁷¹ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 110; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir009.html>; Internet.

¹⁷² "Expediency Discernment Council of the System," *State Structure*; available from <http://www.netiran.com/statestructure.html>; Internet.

of the people of the country in the eyes of the law.”¹⁷³ However, its members are appointed by the head of the judiciary who in turn is appointed by the Leader. The Supreme Court therefore further buttresses the Leader’s authority.

Nor is the Majlis any check upon the power of the Leader. Although it is described as a unicameral legislature, it has, in effect, an upper house known as the Council of Guardians. The Council of Guardians must approve all legislation as being “Islamic” in character before it is sent to the President for signature. It is composed of twelve members. Six are clerical Islamic canonists appointed by the Leader. The other six are lay jurists appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council, which ultimately is under the Leader by virtue of his position as supreme judicial authority. If this were not a great enough check upon the power of the Majlis, all unresolved disputes between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians are resolved by Exigency Council, whose members are all selected by the Leader.¹⁷⁴

The Council of Guardians is also responsible for certifying who is and is not eligible to run for election. They approve the candidacy of those running for the Majlis, the Assembly of Experts, and the presidency. The Council of Guardians may also interpret the constitution and issue popular referenda.¹⁷⁵ The conservative nature of the Council may be seen from its track record. Between 1981 and 1987, the Council vetoed about 100 reform bills passed by the Majlis because they were “violations against the

¹⁷³ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 107; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir009.html>; Internet.

¹⁷⁴ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 91; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir007.html>; Internet.

¹⁷⁵ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, arts. 98 & 99; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir007.html>; Internet.

sanctity of private property.”¹⁷⁶ These bills included the nationalization of foreign trade, demonstrating that the Council’s conservatism exceeded even its xenophobia, as nationalizing foreign trade concerns is a frequent policy in young, revolutionary regimes.

It can be seen that there is no effective check upon the power of the Leader. He is indeed the final word on all policy made in Iran. This is the embodiment of the principle of velayat-e faqih. In addition to all the wide-ranging powers he can exercise over the other branches of government, he also has some independent authority. He leads a number of “institutions and agencies which are not accountable to any branch of state....”¹⁷⁷ These organizations have their own budgets and may pursue and fund their own activities, independently of the rest of the government. These organizations include: Panzdah Khordad Foundation, Martyr Foundation, Housing Foundation, Literacy Movement, Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, Islamic Propaganda Organization, Land Allocation Committees, and the Foundation of the Oppressed.

Some organizations, such as the Islamic Propaganda Organization (IPO), issue communiq  s that sound like authoritative foreign policy decisions and often have the support of large numbers of Iranians. For instance, the IPO is known for its vehement attacks on Israel as “a cancerous tumor” and its depiction of the United States as trying to “prevent the growth of Islam.” The only way to fight the sinister plots hatched by the “Great Satan” is to revert “to the Islamic ideology.”¹⁷⁸ The IPO also figured prominently

¹⁷⁶ Abrahamian, p. 55.

¹⁷⁷ “Leadership,” *State Structure*; available from <http://www.netiran.com/statestructure.html>; Internet.

¹⁷⁸ “IPO Invites the Peoples of Region to Support Palestine,” *IRNA*, 18 January 1998; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

in promoting and participating in the Qods Day observances.¹⁷⁹

Some of the violence and repression of freedom that occurs in Iran appears to be perpetrated by these organizations, without the express permission of the rest of the government.¹⁸⁰ Ansar-e Hizbollah (Supporters of the Party of God), not to be confused with the Iranian-government backed Lebanese Hizbollah, frequently is the vehicle for such militant violence. They have recently set fire to cinemas, attacked moviegoers, and assaulted women riding bicycles. The group has stated that it intends to "preserve the society's values and stop un-Islamic phenomena."¹⁸¹

Theoretically, with their independent budgets and lack of accountability, these organizations could fund, train, or otherwise sponsor terrorist organizations without the knowledge or permission of any part of Iran's government except for the Leader. In practice, Iran's government has apparently been privy to all Iranian-sponsored acts of terrorism. For instance, the IRGC is usually present in areas where Iran is known to sponsor terrorism or subversion, such as Lebanon, Sudan, and Bosnia.¹⁸² In April 1997, a German court convicted an Iranian national and three Lebanese nationals of assassinating four Kurdish opposition leaders in Germany. Judge Frithjof Kubsch ruled that these four men acted on the orders from then-President Rafsanjani, Leader Khamenei, and then-

¹⁷⁹ "IPO Invites Masses to Rally on Qods Day," *Iran News*, 17 January 1998; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

¹⁸⁰ Department of State, *Human Rights Country Reports*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997); available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

¹⁸¹ Douglas Jehl, "Militants in Iran Renew Their Attacks on Western Influences," *The New York Times*, 9 May 1996, Section A, 11; available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

¹⁸² House International Relations Committee, International Operations and Human Rights Subcommittee, *The Challenge of Revolutionary Iran*, prepared testimony of James Phillips (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996); available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

Minister of Information and Security (MOIS), Ali Fallahijan.¹⁸³ Therefore, in all documented cases it appears that the Iranian government has had knowledge and complicity of terrorism supported from Iran. However, with the change to Khatami's government, it is conceivable that Khamenei may want to exercise his "hard-line" options through these organizations independently.

Clearly, the Leader is a position that yields enormous, unchecked power in Iran. However, most of the Leader's power is in the form of negative (veto) power or indirect authority, such as the power to appoint those who make the decisions. His direct, positive authority is relegated to the shadows of the unaccountable organizations. The next most powerful man in Iran, the one who has the most direct, positive power, is the President. He signs and implements all laws passed by the Majlis. He administers the budget, ratified by the Majlis. He has many important foreign policy-related duties, such as signing treaties, receiving the credentials of foreign ambassadors, endorsing the credentials of Iranian ambassadors, and presiding over the National Security Council. He appoints his ministers to the cabinet, subject to Majlis approval and answerable to votes of no confidence. These ministers include such key foreign policy-related posts as Defense, Economy and Finance, Energy, Foreign Affairs, Information (Intelligence), Oil, and Posts Telephones & Telegraphs.¹⁸⁴

As long as the Leader does not block him, the President may chart the foreign policy course of Iran in virtually every aspect. It is recognized that the Leader has the

¹⁸³ "Four Mykonos Defendants to Appeal, More Protests in Teheran," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 17 April 1997, International Section; available from LEXIS-NEXIS.

¹⁸⁴ "The Executive," *State Structure*; available from <http://www.netiran.com/dailynews.html>; Internet.

“final say” on all foreign policy issues and is expected to lay down general guidelines for foreign policy. For instance, the National Security Council that the President presides over determines “the defence and national security policies within the framework of general policies determined by the Leader.”¹⁸⁵ Therefore, while the Leader sets the general guidelines, the President is expected to make and implement specific foreign policy.

Since the Council of Guardians must approve presidential candidates, there is a tendency toward conservative candidates. Note that the President need not be a cleric, as the only requirement is that he is of Iranian origin and nationality and a Twelver Shia.¹⁸⁶ He may therefore be a layperson like the first president, Bani-Sadr, although only clerics have been elected to the post since Bani-Sadr. Among those approved by the Council the choice is up to the people. Although Iran is not considered a liberal democracy by anyone, it is a functioning democracy and has held relatively free and fair elections since the revolution. This has been noted when men were elected that the clerics in power opposed, such as Bani-Sadr and Khatami. Therefore, the popular mood and opinion have much to do with who is elected to the presidency. Unlike the Leader, the President can claim to have the mandate of the people. This makes it much more likely that the President, rather than the Leader, would take the initiative in the area of reform, closer ties with the West, curtailing Islamic-inspired terrorism, and so on. There is an institutional bias toward liberalism, that is, curtailing the powers of the Leader and other

¹⁸⁵ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 176; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir014.html>; Internet.

¹⁸⁶ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, art. 115; available from <http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir010.html>; Internet.

non-elected officials who are a check to the President's power. The President is elected to no more than two four-year terms, limiting the time he has in office and ensuring some turnover and "fresh air" in the position.

The other branch of government that has some involvement in foreign affairs is the Majlis. It is much less powerful than the President or the Leader, but it does play a role in the formation of foreign policy. It has permanent committees including Economy and Finance, Oil, Defence and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Foreign Policy, and Revolution Institutions. The Majlis approves all legislation and ratifies all international treaties, protocols, agreements, and contracts. The Majlis can also approve the imposition of martial law. A response to Iran's history of foreign domination has also resulted in the Majlis with several other important functions. The Majlis must approve all loans taken by the government. The granting of business concessions to foreign companies or individuals is forbidden, although the Majlis can approve the hiring of foreign experts. Lastly, the Majlis has the right to investigate any matter in the government and can question any minister or the President.¹⁸⁷

Although the Majlis lacks the power to initiate foreign policy on its own, it does have the power to inhibit the President's foreign policy through its "veto power." For instance, the Majlis can refuse to ratify treaties, pass laws against certain policies, refuse to approve loans, question the President or members of his government, and even initiate a no-confidence vote on the President, his Cabinet, or any of his ministers singly. These powers can have a profound effect on foreign policy under certain circumstances. The

¹⁸⁷ Islamic Republic of Iran, *Constitution*, arts. 71, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, & 88; available from

“trickery” referenced in Chapter 2 that led to a Soviet withdrawal from Iran and cessation of support for separatist clients depended upon the Majlis’ veto power. Prime Minister Qavam agreed to a generous oil concession to the Soviets in return for Soviet withdrawal, knowing full well that the Majlis would not ratify the treaty. The Soviets, mirror-imaging their own political system, assumed the prime minister would automatically have the support of the Majlis and withdrew from Iranian soil and allowed Qavam to put down the Azerbaijani and Kurdish insurrections. In October 1947, Qavam submitted the treaty to the Majlis, which promptly rejected it and caused the fall of the Qavam government.¹⁸⁸ Although this occurred under the 1906 Constitution, the structure and powers of the Majlis today are virtually the same in this respect.

The dynamic at work in the selection of Majlis members is similar to that of the President. Candidates must seek the approval of the Leader-dominated Council of Guardians, ensuring their acceptability to conservative forces. However, among those approved the public elects whomever they choose. Majlis members may be laypersons, and in fact, there is no requirement that they be Twelver Shias. The officially recognized religious minorities (Zoroastrians, Jews, Armenians, and Assyrian Christians) have a specified number of seats in the Majlis they may elect representatives to. The remainder of the Majlis members must be Muslim, but they can be of any Islamic persuasion. The large size of the Majlis, 270 members, from diverse areas of Iran ensures some variety in the political leanings of the Majlis. Therefore, the Majlis is likely to have at least a fair representation of the moderate faction. This means the Majlis is not likely to use its veto

http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/ir007_.html; Internet.

power against the President's foreign policy based on ideology alone. Rather, if they use this veto power it would probably be in response to particular domestic political concerns or because of a dislike of the President personally. The Leader, due to the institutional bias towards radicalism, is much more likely to prohibit the President from pursuing moderate or even pragmatic policies on strictly ideological grounds.

The judiciary does not play a key role in foreign policy making. As noted in the earlier analysis of the Leader, it does act to indirectly extend the Leader's power over all of the government, thereby strengthening his influence in the foreign policy process. The judiciary does play one other role of note. Revolutionary tribunals are responsible for trying charges of terrorism and offenses against national security.¹⁸⁹ Conceivably, if any Iranian national was charged with terrorism, committed in a foreign country at the behest of the Iranian government, it is unlikely that such a tribunal would convict that person. This de facto control by the Leader ensures domestic immunity for anyone acting on his orders.

The "rules of the game" in Iran, that is, its constitution and laws, have established a bias for radical individuals to be selected for the position of Leader and the associated government functions, such as the Assembly of Experts, Exigency Council, Judiciary, Council of Guardians, and the unaccountable organizations. Taken together, these institutions help perpetuate this radical bias within themselves. However, the powers of these organs of the government mainly restrict them to restraining or prohibiting policy pursued by the President or the Majlis. Conversely, the structure of the Presidency and

¹⁸⁸ Yapp, 181-183.

the Majlis allow for a wider range of political views. Therefore, if any change or innovation is to occur in Iranian foreign policy, it is likely to originate with the President. The Majlis is not likely to oppose the President on ideological grounds, unlike the Leader. However, no policies can be pursued without at least the tacit approval of the Leader, as he has the ultimate authority over all policy decisions in Iran. Obviously, these are general guidelines. Specific domestic political concerns or individual quirks always leave a degree of uncertainty in the specific actions of all actors. However, given the strong, self-reinforcing system currently in place, any dramatic variation from this pattern is highly improbable.

¹⁸⁹ "The Judiciary," *State Structure*; available from <http://www.netiran.com/statestructure.html>; Internet.

V. CONCLUSION

Despite the disparate elements and the varying domestic political elements vying for power and influence in the Islamic Republic, the history of Iran's experience with foreign domination provides all Iranians with a common bond. This bond forms a sort of cultural xenophobia that impels a fear and distrust of foreigners and an aversion to anything smacking of foreign domination. This xenophobia is less pronounced among Iran's youth, who do not have personal experience with foreign domination but do have experience with the failing economy and lack of opportunities under the mullah's regime. However, this fear of foreigners has been ingrained into the fabric of Iranian policy making through the institution of the state, namely, the constitution. Given the relatively recent history of Western intervention in and domination of Iranian affairs, even the youth will continue to be cautious in their dealings with the West. Iran's foreign policy will be driven and constrained by this xenophobic reaction for the foreseeable future. As the increasing number of young people in Iran, those born since the revolution, reach the young voting age of 15, and later themselves begin to occupy positions of power, this policy may moderate, but it will not change course rapidly.

To Western observers, Islam also appears to be a unifying element, much like the fear of foreign domination. To a degree this is true, as any statements or actions that fall outside of the acceptable discourse bring severe consequences, up to and including charges of treason. However, Khomeini's legacy, the Covenant of Brotherhood, legitimized disagreement within established parameters. This disagreement has flowered

into a vigorous political debate that directly impacts policy-making, including foreign policy-making.

By itself, Islam drives and constrains foreign policy in a general way. A more specific understanding, or a more accurate prediction, requires slightly more information. Because of the various interpretations and applications of Islam, it is important to know what brand of Islam the decision-makers adhere to. Various policy-makers in the Iranian government have different amounts and types of power with which to direct or obstruct foreign policy. The various positions in the government also tend to attract (or require) certain types of people with specific predispositions. Furthermore, in order to stay in power, or to maintain or expand influence, various positions will reinforce certain biases in the individuals who fill those positions. Therefore, without even knowing who an individual is or what his or her background is, one can make useful predictions as to his or her likely brand of foreign policy.

Other types of information can fill in even more gaps and provide more information to further understanding or refine predictions. However, such information is labor-intensive, tends to be limited to individual cases, and yields marginally less results. A detailed historical analysis or a focused prediction would benefit from such information as regional politics, domestic politics, or the individual personalities and backgrounds of various decision-makers. However, the three key factors, the history of foreign domination, Islam, and the institutional rules/biases within the Islamic Republic still form the foundation for such analysis or prediction. These three key factors form a useful template to apply to all cases of Iranian foreign policy. A general understanding

and prediction of Iranian foreign policy can therefore easily and quickly be made.

This hypothesis can be briefly tested in two manners. First, its utility in analyzing a historical event will be tested by examining relevant facets of the Iran/Contra Affair. Second, its utility in predicted future behavior will be tested by a brief prediction concerning the future of Iranian relations with the West.

Using this hypothesis, one would expect revolutionary Iran to avoid contact with the West, especially the United States and Israel, whenever possible. This would be done even if it were detrimental to the goals and objectives of Iranian leaders. If such avoidance incurred an unacceptably high cost, then contact would be made in as circumspect manner as possible. Steps would be taken to insure plausible deniability, and individuals within the Iranian government would cover their tracks personally so they would not go the way of Bazargan in 1979. One would also expect Iranian leaders to avoid offending Islamic sensibilities within Iran, and to further the aims of other Islamist groups, even at some cost to Iran. The decentralized, conflicting nature of Iran's government would reveal itself in inconsistent policy and inefficient administration that sometimes failed to support the stated policy.

During the Iran-Iraq War, Iran had to deal with the West. Almost all of Iran's military hardware was made in the West, especially in the United States, and Iran needed to deal with the West in order to survive the war. Therefore Iran made overtures to Israel and the United States through intermediaries to obtain needed materiel. Intermediaries were used to insure plausible deniability, although this caused a sub-maximal result. The first channel used by Israel and the United States was Manucher Ghorbanifar, an Iranian

businessmen with no official connection to the government. Mohsen Kangarlu, deputy prime minister and chief of foreign intelligence activities, was Ghorbanifar's government contact.¹⁹⁰ The second channel used by the United States included Sadegh Tabatabai, Khomeini's son-in-law, Mehdi Bahremani, one of Rafsanjani's sons, and Ahmed Rafsanjani, Rafsanjani's nephew. Tabatabai held the title of "special ambassador" because he was sometimes used for sensitive diplomatic work, but none of these men held official government posts.¹⁹¹

The use of these intermediaries, especially Ghorbanifar, caused numerous delays, misunderstandings, embarrassments, and even failures for both the Iranian government and the U.S. government. Although the pragmatist faction was leading the arms-for-hostages deal with the United States, they did not always receive the arms or the credit for them. The more radical IRGC received the first shipment of 96 TOW anti-tank missiles on August 20, 1985.¹⁹² Khomeini gave credit to the more radical Prime Minister Mir Hussein Mussavi for the first block of 504 TOWs, even though it was mainly Kangarlu's effort.¹⁹³ The IRGC also took the 18 HAWK Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs) that arrived on November 24, 1985.¹⁹⁴ On October 26, 1986, the IRGC again seized the shipment of 500 TOWs, even though these were shipped through the more reliable second channel.¹⁹⁵ These incidents clearly display the decentralized nature of Iran's government, not to mention the sub-maximal result for the interested parties.

¹⁹⁰ Walsh, 13.

¹⁹¹ Segev, 253.

¹⁹² Ibid., 174; also Walsh, 12.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 179.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 204; also Walsh, 15.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 310; also Walsh, 22.

Another incident that illustrates the fear of contact with the West was the “summit” held in Tehran between members of the Iranian government and U.S. National Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane 25-28 May 1986. Oliver North, George W. Cave, and Howard Teicher were also in attendance from the United States, as well as Amiram Nir from Israel. No one of ministerial rank from the Iranian side ever met with the Americans. Only junior members of the Iranian government met with them, and when McFarlane demanded to speak with more senior government officials, he was told that the last time a prime minister met with an American government official he was dismissed.¹⁹⁶ Naturally, “[l]ittle was accomplished” in such a poorly planned and executed meeting.¹⁹⁷

Perhaps the most striking example of the sub-maximal results generated by Iran’s fear of contact with foreigners and its decentralized government was in the way the Iran/Contra Affair fell apart and became exposed. Although Iran received 2,004 TOWs and some spare parts, it missed out on opportunities to receive thousands more TOWs mainly because its intermediaries were unreliable and unable to commit the Iranian government in a binding manner. There were other proposals on the table, such as the delivery of advanced anti-aircraft radar systems, that went unfulfilled because the affair was publicized. Ghorbanifar was cut out of the deal when the second channel was opened, so in retribution he revealed the details of the Tehran summit to Ayatollah Montazeri, Rafsanjani’s political rival. Montazeri, in turn, revealed the meeting to *Al-Shira'a*, a Lebanese publication sympathetic to him. Rafsanjani tried to put the best spin

¹⁹⁶ Segev, 273-274.

possible on the damaging revelation by saying, "McFarlane's visit proved that 'the U.S. is unable to defeat the Islamic Revolution' and that American leaders 'are now coming to Iran on their knees.'"¹⁹⁸ Probably the only reason Rafsanjani weathered the storm as well as he did was because the exposure of the Iran/Contra Affair damaged the U. S. administration so badly.

The Islamic aspect of the Iran/Contra Affair revealed itself primarily in two ways. First, of the 18 HAWKs shipped to Iran, 17 were returned (one was test-fired against an Iraqi plane). They were returned because they did not meet the specifications that the Iranians hoped they would, and because they still bore the Star of David, as they had been taken out of Israel's inventory.¹⁹⁹ Israel had supplied Iran with weapons for years, but normally the Israelis removed such markings before shipment. It should also be noted that "Operation Cosmos," an attempt early in the Iran/Contra Affair to arm Iran with Israeli-made weapons, failed because of "internal difficulties."²⁰⁰ In other words, Iran only wanted to release hostages for American-made arms.

Second, the Iranians asked for favors from Israel and the United States in obtaining the release of Shia prisoners. This request came even though the Iranians knew it would cost them some concessions on their part. On January 22, 1986, Ghorbanifar asked for the release of 100 Shia prisoners held in southern Lebanon. He stated that 50 prisoners were "the minimum," but he clearly did not hold a preference for whom, just as

¹⁹⁷ Walsh, 21.

¹⁹⁸ Segev, 270.

¹⁹⁹ Walsh, 15, 19.

²⁰⁰ Segev, 24.

long as they were Shias.²⁰¹ Iran later demanded that the United States pressure Kuwait into releasing the “Da’wa 17,” the 17 Shia terrorists convicted of bombings in Kuwait.²⁰² Iran also presented Hizbollah’s demands for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, Israeli evacuation of southern Lebanon, the dissolution of the South Lebanon army, and the extradition of General Antoine Lahad to East Beirut.²⁰³

In short, the Iranian government made extensive use of third-party intermediaries to limit the appearance of dealing with the United States and Israel. This was done even though it was a cumbersome process that resulted in numerous delays and failures, and ultimately with the exposure of the whole affair. Islam informed and constrained the entire process from such petty details as returning arms bearing the Star of David to more major issues such as making demands on behalf of fellow (non-Iranian) Shias, even though these demands necessarily became part of the bargain-concession calculus.

The individual level of analysis fails to explain such behavior adequately. The arms deals with the United States came from Khomeini’s initiative. He ordered Rafsanjani and Mussavi to make arrangements for the acquisition of American arms and approved the release of American hostages held in Lebanon in return for arms.²⁰⁴ However, if Khomeini was the decisive decision-maker in this process, then why so many levels of intermediaries? Why did the Iranian government have such difficulty in living up to promises, such as releasing more of the hostages and preventing more from being taken? If Khomeini, as the charismatic, key decision-maker, could make such

²⁰¹ Ibid., 240.

²⁰² Ibid., 255.

²⁰³ Ibid., 277.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 147.

decisions without being constrained by the three key factors, he would have accomplished far more for Iran using a more direct approach. The very sub-maximal result achieved was clearly the result of conflicting agendas and political infighting, not the actions of one key decision-maker.

On the regional level, the war with Iraq did propel Iran to seek arms from the United States. However, there are some unresolved regional questions, such as why did Saudi businessman Adnan Kashoggi enable Ghorbanifar to buy arms from the Americans through his financing with the alleged approval of Saudi King Fahd?²⁰⁵ The Saudis were firmly backing Iraq against Iran and detested Iran's attempts at exporting its revolution to Saudi Arabia.

The domestic political level seems to offer the best alternative, indeed, perhaps even a complementary explanation. The main inducement for various Iranians to vie for American arms was to improve his/their position in the ongoing succession struggle in light of Khomeini's advanced age and sometimes failing health.²⁰⁶ This explains why it was of such concern who received the arms and who received the credit for obtaining them. However, for this explanation to stand alone, it must explain the opportunity costs incurred through the use of intermediaries and presenting demands for other Shias. Clearly, even relevant domestic political forces were shaped by the fear of foreign domination, Islam, and the fractious Iranian government structure.

Virtually any historical incident can be made to fit numerous conflicting hypotheses. In fact, many historical events appear overdetermined in retrospect, as

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 10.

several competing theories seem to each adequately explain what happened and why.

The true test of a hypothesis is the test of time, that is, its predictive power. The next brief test of this hypothesis will lay out a general prediction for the near-term future of Iranian relations with the West.

To address the speculation concerning President Khatami and what direction Iran's foreign policy may be headed, a brief application of the above hypothesis is in order. The history of foreign domination will impact all Iranian foreign policy decisions, especially those concerning states with more power than Iran. Iran will insist on being treated as an equal, even by those with which it is not equal, such as the United States. Obviously, the United States will be hesitant to accord equal status to a state that has historically sponsored terrorism, opposed the existence of Israel, and generally opposed U.S. policies and goals globally. Such a move would necessarily involve a loss of prestige by the United States and accord Iran great status and rank internationally. Iran will demand significant concessions from the United States in return for its own concessions, which on a global scale, are relatively less. This factor alone will impede and slow down any rapprochement between the two states.

This is not to say that improved relations are impossible or will never occur. Iran's economy is in dire straits. Whether or not U.S. sanctions are really hurting Iran's economy, Iran needs all the help it can get. Clearly, removal of sanctions is only the first step to Iran's economic rehabilitation. Given Iran's strategic location along the Persian Gulf and as a conduit to developing Central Asia, the United States also has a strong

²⁰⁶ Walsh, 14.

interest in improving relations over the long term. These overriding considerations will likely propel the two states closer, although the road promises to be bumpy and slow going. It is likely to be a case of three steps forward, two steps back for the foreseeable future.

The main drive for moderation will come from the presidency. The president is likely to embrace the type of Islam more open to contact with and influence from the West and less driven by the need to “export revolution” and repress at home. The president is likely to receive some support from the Majlis. The Leader will act as a conservative force, slowing forward progress and occasionally causing the situation to regress. No foreign policy can survive the open opposition of the Leader and his powerful subordinates. Therefore, if Khatami or any other moderate successor should tread too far too fast, he will be eliminated and replaced by someone more conservative.

Obviously, the voice of the Iranian people matters in this regard, as they elect their president and the Majlis. The continued deterioration of Iran’s economy will drive social discontent. If leaders such as Khatami succeed in establishing an acceptable rate of improvement, they will continue to elect such individuals to the presidency and the Majlis. If they fail, the people may opt toward more conservative clerics and back toward Islamic extremism. However, it is more likely that another revolutionary environment will be created, threatening the existence of the current regime.

In sum, if Khatami brings adequate results without exceeding the acceptable bounds defined by Khamenei, then gradual moderation in Iran’s foreign policy can be expected. If he fails to produce a better life for most Iranians, then social unrest or even

insurrection are strong possibilities. If Khatami alienates the powerful radical forces in Iran, then there is a chance that Iranian policy will tend toward more extremism: the export of revolution and the severing of ties to the West. The recent arrest of the mayor of Tehran, a strong moderate supporter of Khatami, may be an indicator of conservative disapproval. He was arrested by the judiciary without the consultation or notice of the executive branch under Khatami. His subsequent release after tremendous popular displays of support also show the constraints faced by the conservative faction in imposing its will on the general population, despite its formal authority.

In theoretical terms, historical institutionalism has proven to be an excellent approach to Iran's foreign policy making process. It provided great understanding and prediction potential with a minimum of information. Although it is outside the scope of this study, a similar approach should be equally fruitful to the study of domestic Iranian politics. The fear of foreign domination would not so much drive domestic policy as be a weapon used by the political actors against their enemies, highlighted in Chapter 2 by Bani-Sadr's arguments. A closer look at intermediate-level institutional structures such as the factions, political parties (if they emerge), or anything else that "mediate[s] the effects of macro-level socioeconomic structures" would also be necessary.²⁰⁷ A similar approach may also be useful in analyzing the foreign policy making process of other Third World states, as most have had negative experiences with foreign, especially Western, domination in their recent pasts. The institution of Twelver Shi'ism is fairly unique to Iran, therefore some modification would be required to accommodate that

²⁰⁷ Thelen and Steinmo, 11.

element to local conditions, even in other Islamic states. In non-Islamic states, some other powerful cultural factor could be substituted.

Historical institutionalism provides a theoretical framework useful for understanding foreign policy making in Iran. Specifically, the history of foreign domination, Islam, and the government structure within Iran make up three factors of critical importance to all foreign policy decisions. Knowledge of these three factors and how they interact in Iran helps one to see through the complex politics and even more complex rhetoric in Iran and understand Iranian foreign policy making. General predictions can be easily formulated from this relatively parsimonious framework. With such a tool, Western policy-makers can steer clear of the troubled waters that have plagued the West's relations with Iran since the revolution.

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